

Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Strategy



Contributors

Client

CEO – Greenbelt	Edward McDonnell
Chair – Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation	Rob Messervey
Director, Municipal Affairs and Strategic Partnerships – Greenbelt & Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation	Kevin Beaulieu

WSP

Project Principal	Dave McLaughlin
Project Manager & Engagement Lead	Justin Jones
Landscape Architecture & Trails Lead	Amanda Gebhardt
Indigenous Relations	Cassandra Elliott
Technical & Engagement Support	Kyle Dow
Technical & Engagement Support	Erica Stone
GIS & On-Road Network Design Lead	Sandy Yang
Trails and Technical Support	Amy Purvis
Technical Support	Ely DeSandoli
Graphic Design & Technical Support	Lois Leung

Transportation Options

Tourism & Economic Development	Louisa Mursell
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External Advisory Group Members

Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA)	Kevin Lowe
Director – Green Durham Association	Brian Buckles
Director, Economic Development and Tourism - Northumberland County ...	Dan Borowec
Sr. Program Manager – TRCA	Deanna Cheriton
Youth Council – TRCA	Alliza Leogo
Executive Direction – Central Counties RTO	Chuck Thibeault
Credit Valley Conservation	Terri Leroux
ORTA Volunteer/ User Representative	Cathy Brown
Deputy Mayor – Township of Uxbridge	Willie Popp
Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA)	Dave Burnett
Nature Conservancy of Canada	Rick Simpson
Past President – Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA)	Wilma Millage
Regional Director – Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA)	Brian Millage
Executive Director – Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust	Susan Walmer
Nature Conservancy of Canada	Mark Staab

Further review and additions were made to the Trail Strategy to enhance Truth and Reconciliation objectives and actions for the Trail Strategy.

Cambium Indigenous Professional Services

First Nation Reviewer – Alderville First Nation	Kassandra McKweon
First Nation Reviewer – Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation	Kerry Ann Charles



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Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation Chair's Message

The Oak Ridges Moraine is a fascinating and vital part of the Southern Ontario landscape. Its porous sands and gravels which reach a depth of over 250 metres absorb rainfall and snowmelt which percolates into underground aquifers, providing a vital supply of groundwater to over 80 rivers and major creeks and streams which flow north to Lake Simcoe and south to Lake Ontario along its 160 km length. In addition to its critical role as a hydrologic feature, the Moraine is also a vital natural heritage system supporting a tremendous biodiversity of habitats, plant ecosystems and wildlife and populations. It provides connectivity. It is deemed essential to the health and quality of life of the current 7 million people who reside within its watersheds, and future generations.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation has a long history of supporting initiatives that strengthen the resilience of this critical part of Ontario's landscape, educate the public about its enormous value as Ontario's 'rain barrel', and encourage engagement and increased access.

The ORM Conservation Plan, which emanated from the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act in 2002, has been instrumental in preserving the Moraine. The Foundation, which was created at the same time as the supporting legislation, is meant to ensure it is a living resource. We have been proud of this ongoing work.

Renewal and growth of the ORM Trail is an obvious way to expand this work and engage a new generation of trail enthusiasts, nature lovers, and local communities in carrying this legacy forward. We also need to learn from and engage with the indigenous peoples who have centuries of history of living on and travelling across the Moraine. The Oak Ridges Trail Association has done terrific work over the past few decades of creating a connected trail through the beautiful geography of the Moraine. Renewed pressures and interests have created an opportunity to make it a true signature trail and an asset for not only the GTA but for Ontario as a whole.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who have contributed to this strategy and who will contribute to its implementation over the coming decades. It is an exciting partnership that will benefit future generations.



Rob Messervey
*Director, Ontario Greenbelt Foundation Board,
Chair, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation*

Greenbelt Foundation

CEO's Message

The Oak Ridges Moraine is one of the foundational components of Ontario's Greenbelt, and home to some of the richest soil and critical water systems in southern Ontario. The ORM Trail is an incredible, yet sometimes under-recognized resource serving communities all along the Moraine.

At the Greenbelt Foundation, we have been proud to support and partner with the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation to develop this strategy that will unlock the true potential of the Trail. It will be important moving forward that we not only improve the Trail but raise awareness of it and increase its profile in the official plans of the municipalities through which it passes.

This strategy is not only an aspirational document but a call to action. We will need the involvement and investment of all sectors so we can realize the Trail's full social, cultural, and economic possibilities.

We thank all the participants for this work of reflection and planning. We look forward to the next steps, and ultimately to seeing you on the Trail!



Edward McDonnell
CEO, Greenbelt Foundation

Chapter 1

Overview

- 1.1 Land Acknowledgement
- 1.2 The ORMT and its Role in Reconciliation
- 1.3 The Oak Ridges Moraine
- 1.4 Who is Involved in the Trail Right Now?
- 1.5 Purpose of This Strategy



1.1 Land Acknowledgement

The Greenbelt Foundation acknowledges that the land we meet on and strive to protect is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and is now home to many other diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The area we now call the Greenbelt consists of treaty lands. It is important that we learn about the history and continued presence of these treaties because we are all treaty people.

The lakes, rivers, and wetlands, as well as forests, ravines, and healthy farmlands in the Greenbelt have been stewarded and protected by the First Peoples since time immemorial and we are grateful to the First Peoples for their care of the land on Turtle Island. We respect and are inspired by the deep connection of kinship that Indigenous Peoples have with the land.

We acknowledge the truth of the events of the past and their continuing effects, and the enduring rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We recognize that the Greenbelt is based on a land management plan developed by settlers, and we as a Foundation have a responsibility to ensure the work we do reflects the continued efforts and rights of the First Peoples of this land.

We will continue to look for ways to align our mandate with the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and further educate ourselves on Indigenous Knowledge Systems that can inform and support our mandate to sustain the air, lands and waterways in the Greenbelt.

1.2 The ORMT and its Role in Reconciliation

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is located on land of the Williams Treaties First Nations and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat. It is now home to other Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have been stewards of these lands since time immemorial.

The Trail Strategy is an opportunity to build relations with local First Nations communities by honouring and amplifying histories and cultures and supporting deep connections and responsibilities to care for the land. Partnerships with Rights holders will be sought to support Trail governance and implementation activities. Other Indigenous Peoples, including urban Indigenous populations, may benefit from access to greenspace, and collaborations with multiple Indigenous organizations can embrace a Two-Eyed Seeing approach that respects and recognizes Indigenous and Western knowledge and ways of knowing.

By drawing people to the Moraine and connecting them with the land in an intimate, meaningful way, the Trail can create spaces where First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples' presence on these lands are made visible, and where histories can be shared in a manner defined by Indigenous People.

The process of developing the Trail and implementing this Strategy will be guided by a fundamental desire to support responsibilities to care for the land, share stories, create spaces for ceremonial access and provide access to traditional harvesting territories. The partners involved in the development of this Strategy are committed to a trail that recognizes the value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and learning about the histories that will create a collective path forward based on reciprocity, trust and gratitude.



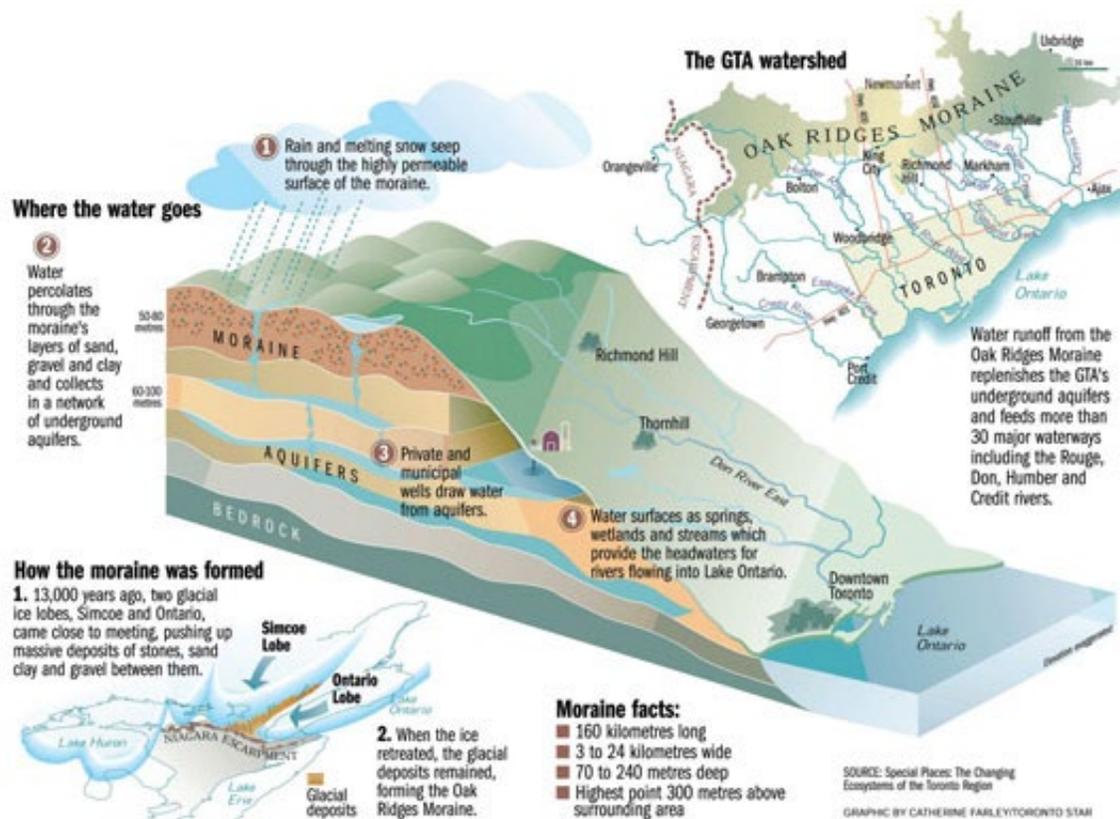
1.3 The Oak Ridges Moraine

The Oak Ridges Moraine is an environmentally sensitive geological formation in south central Ontario. It covers approximately 470,000 acres and stretches from the Trent River in the east to the Niagara Escarpment in the west. Formed 13,000 years ago when two glacial ice lobes nearly met, the Moraine is the result of immense forces pushing up massive deposits of stones, sand, clay, and gravel. As the ice retreated, the glacial deposits remained, forming the Oak Ridges Moraine. With its rolling hills and fertile soil, the Moraine is one of Ontario's most iconic landforms – rivalling the Niagara Escarpment in scale and significance. At over 160km long and between 3 and 24 km wide, the Moraine reaches elevations of nearly 300m above the surrounding area, providing spectacular vistas and defining the landscape of Southern Ontario.

The Oak Ridges Moraine is uniquely important to the water systems in Ontario. With an overburden depth of up to 150m, the Moraine is able to absorb

up to 10 times the volume of water compared to the surrounding landscapes, making it a vital water filtration and storage feature in Ontario. The permeable surface of the Moraine allows water to slowly percolate through the layers of sand, gravel, and clay left behind when the glaciers retreated, acting as a natural water filtration system for major portions of Southern Ontario.

The underground aquifers fed by the Moraine are used by private wells and municipal water systems alike, sustaining Ontario's population and agricultural needs. The Moraine is the dividing line between the Lake Ontario watershed in the south and the Lake Simcoe and Trent River watersheds in the north, and is the headwaters of more than 80 rivers and major creeks, including the Rouge, Don, Humber, and Credit rivers (Special Places: The Changing Ecosystem of the Toronto Region and Image via www.oakridgestrail.org) – it truly is the place where many of Ontario's most important, life-sustaining rivers begin.



Because of its widely varied geology, vegetation and topography, the Moraine is also home to insects and dozens of species of mammals, amphibians, and fish several of which are identified as species at risk or endangered. The Moraine consists of many different ecosystems that are intricately interconnected with one another, resulting in a boom in biodiversity that should be protected and preserved to support the resilience of future generations.

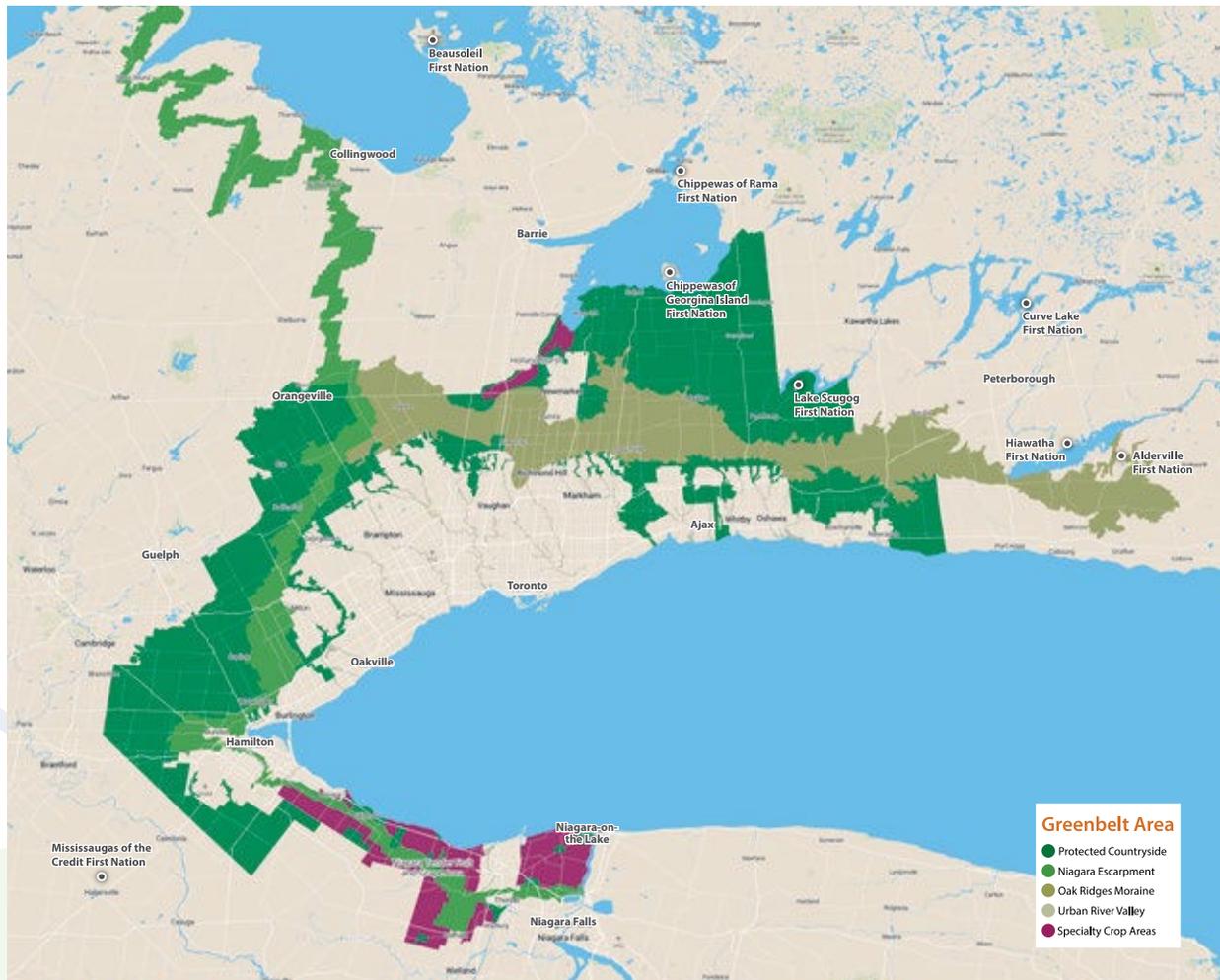
The recognition of the significance of the Moraine and the importance of preserving its critical functions – especially its role in the water cycle – led to the creation of watershed management planning in its modern form in Ontario. With the formation of STORM (Save The Oak Ridges Moraine) in 1989, discussions about development and “unsound environmental policies at all levels of government” were brought into the mainstream, leading to a broader public conversation about the importance of watershed management and the importance of areas like the Moraine.



Image via: www.oakridgestrail.org

As the communities in the Greater Toronto Area continued to grow, residents saw more development pressure on the Moraine and began asking how the Moraine could be protected, and how more people could access and enjoy its unique natural features. The Bruce Trail, which had been developed based on a 1959 vision for a public footpath spanning the entire Niagara Escarpment, had already demonstrated the value

in creating a trail to connect people to a natural feature to inspire conservation efforts. Inspired by the success of the Bruce Trail, keen organizers convened the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Organizing Committee in 1991-92 to promote the idea of a Moraine-wide hiking trail as a way to connect people to the Moraine and preserve the natural landscapes along the route¹.



1. For a more complete recent history of the ORMT, see: "The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Association Story - 25 years across the Moraine: 1992-2017".

History Overview

1994



Introduction

Briefly known as Citizens for an Oak Ridges Trail (CORT), the Organizing Committee became the Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA) in 1994, operating as a registered charity from 1995 through the present day.

1997



First Publicization

The first Oak Ridges Trail guidebook was published in 1997, and work continued to improve the Trail in the following years with the support of dedicated volunteers.

1999



Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust

The increasing awareness of the significance of the Moraine brought new voices to the table, with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT) being formed in 1999 with a mandate to protect lands along the Moraine.

2001



Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act

In 2001, the Ontario government passed the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act into law, making the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) a binding policy directive. Section 39 of the ORMCP sets the Policy and Regulatory framework for the Trail System. To oversee the implementation of the plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF) was established.

2001
to 2009



Trail Development

Prior to the adoption of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act the existing Trail had been established through the keen interest of volunteers and the kindness of landowners and public authorities. The ORMCA outlined the development of a Moraine-wide trail as a provincial policy directive, creating a renewed sense of energy around the Trail. In 2003, an Optimum Trail Corridor was defined. Between 2004 and 2009, ORTA, the ORMLT and the ORMF worked closely together to expand and improve the Trail, culminating in the completion of the Trail in 2009. At that time, the Trail was 216km long with 116km of the Trail within the identified Optimum Trail Corridor. This period of expansion moved more of the Trail off-road, created more parking areas for users and developed accessible trails that can be used by people with disabilities.

2010+



Trail Expansion

In the years since 2009 the Trail has grown, with an eastern extension opening in 2010. ORTA has continued to connect residents to the Trail through guided hikes and special events, and new trail keys, signage and trailheads have been installed.

The rapid pace of expansion and improvement that characterized the decade between 1999 and 2009 has largely slowed, leading to the need for this Strategy. This Strategy aims to renew the sense of purpose that was demonstrated during the early years of the Trail by providing guidance for the next generation of leaders, building on the previous successes and clearly defining the resources required to ensure that the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is built and maintained in a way that connects people to this vital landscape for years to come.

Current Status

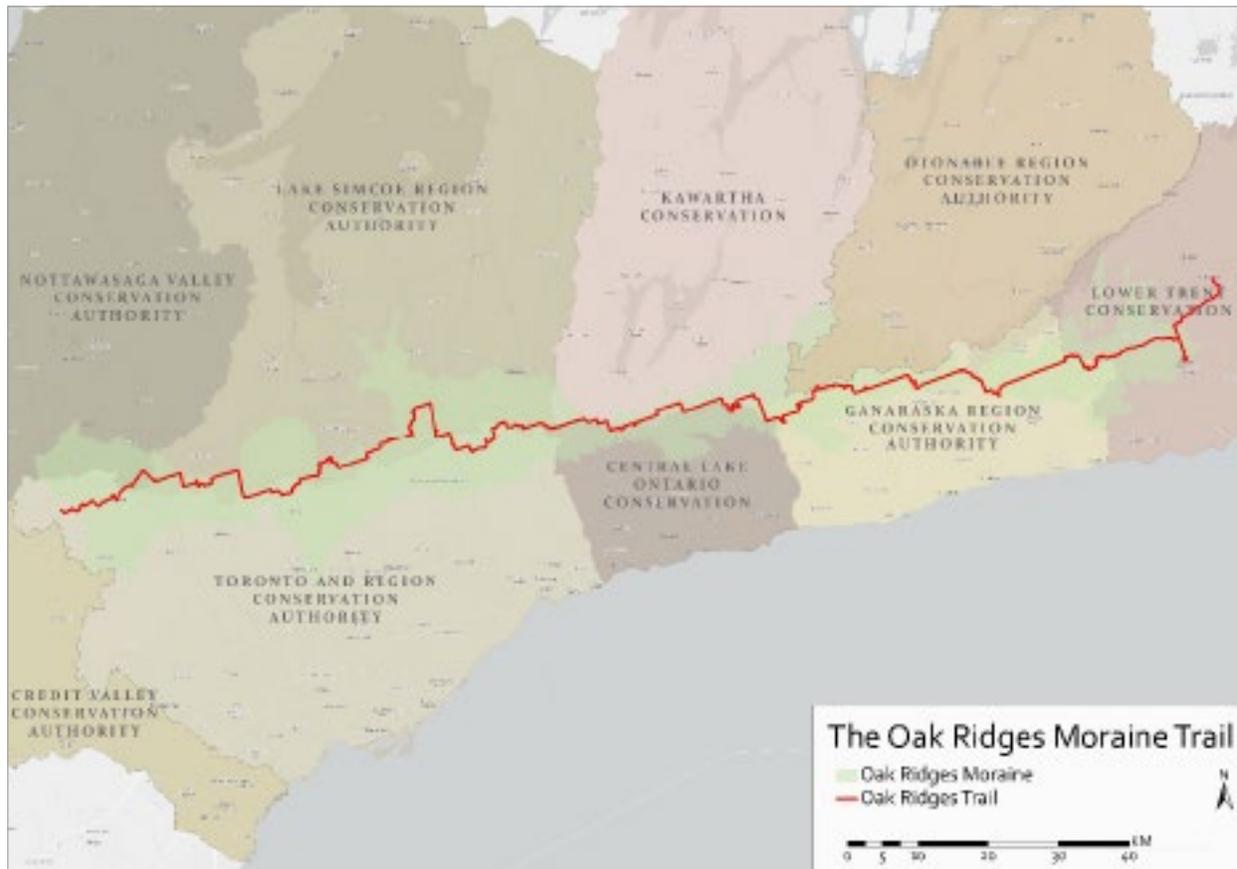
Length: 268 KM



53% of the total length being represented by on-road facilities. Most of the on-road trail is on shared roadways – low volume rural roads without shoulders or sidewalks.

While some of the Trail is on roads with paved shoulders, the ideal condition for the Trail is to provide a continuous off-road trail so this Strategy does not meaningfully differentiate between routes where there is a shoulder versus those where the roadway is shared.

The remaining Trail length is defined as a hiking trail – either gravel, dirt or packed earth trails, with a small percentage (about 2%) of multi-use paths, shared space or routes through a parking lot. These off-road segments provide varying degrees of access and difficulty, but they largely reflect the desired conditions for the ultimate state of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail.





1.4 Who is Involved in the Trail Right Now?

There are many governments, First Nations, agencies, and other partners with an interest in the Trail. There are four organizations with specific mandates that relate to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, and who are seen as the primary agencies with an interest in the outcome of the Strategy.

1. The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation
2. The Greenbelt Foundation
3. Oak Ridge Moraine Land Trust
4. Oak Ridge Moraine Trail Association



The Greenbelt Foundation stewards Ontario’s Greenbelt, dedicated to the health and prosperity of it. The core mandate of the foundation is to ensure the Greenbelt remains permanent, protected, and prosperous. Their key focus includes:

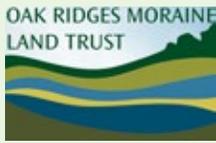
- Investing in agriculture, environmental protection, tourism, and restoration of natural environment.
- Providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and fostering livable communities.
- Engagement through education, research, grant making, and partnerships.
- Evaluating economic benefits of Greenbelt assets.

Funding for this organization is received from the Government of Ontario and other public and private supports (donations, pledges, grants, etc.). The Oak Ridges Moraine represents a significant portion of the Greenbelt, with the Trail providing an opportunity to enhance connections to the Moraine and the Greenbelt for residents and visitors.



The Oak Ridge Moraine Foundation has educated Ontarians and promoted the importance of the Oak Ridges Moraine as a unique hydrological feature, as well as a landscape with unparalleled biodiversity. The Foundation has improved access to the Oak Ridges Moraine landscape for recreational purposes through strategic grants and communications and has supported monitoring and restoration activities that protect critical Moraine water systems. The organization has defined set of priorities to ensure the long-term protection of the Moraine and provides the oversight for establishment, design, and maintenance of the Trail.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation was incorporated into the Greenbelt Foundation in 2020 but retains its formal mandate to promote and preserve the Moraine.



The Oak Ridge Moraine Land Trust is a group of citizens and neighbours working together based on the core mandate to protect and steward ecologically important land on and near the Oak Ridges Moraine for everyone's collective benefit.

Their key focus includes:

- Long term land securement, protection, monitoring and stewardship of Moraine properties.
- Ensure healthy ecosystem and natural environments that thrive on and near the ORM.
- Engagement with broad community, education, and participation that includes and values Indigenous peoples.
- Align public policy with environmental protection and action against climate change.



The Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA) is a volunteer based charitable hiking organization with a core mandate to build and maintain a public hiking trail system on the Oak Ridges Moraine, off-road where possible, to organize and promote hiking on this trail system, and to encourage responsible stewardship of the Moraine's natural environment.

Their key focus includes:

- Programming & promotion (increased awareness).
- Trail maintenance.
- Trail development.
- Chapter membership acquisition.
- Engaging in partnerships with individual, municipal, provincial, and federal landowners.

Understanding the institutional capacity of each partner organization as well as their historical contributions to the Trail is important for the Strategy moving forward. Similar information is important to understand when building new trail relations and partnerships, including with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples. As the Strategy is implemented, collaboration and communication between these organizations and other implementing partners will be vital to reducing the duplication of efforts and streamlining processes. Organizational charts for the four organizations listed above can be found in [Appendix B](#).

1.5 Purpose of the Strategy

The Oak Ridges Moraine, like many areas in southern Ontario, is facing unprecedented development pressures. With each passing year, potential links in the Trail are at risk of being permanently lost to development or land ownership changes. The cooperative efforts that resulted in such dramatic improvements in the Trail in the early 2000s serve as a model to illustrate how collaboration and communication between stakeholders, community volunteers and others can support the Trail.

Going forward, a new sense of purpose and opportunity is to build reciprocal relationships with First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples along the Trail and more wholistically within the Moraine and Greenbelt. By honouring treaties and First Nations Rights holders, strong relationships will also greatly enhance the Trail experience for everyone, through education, stewardship activities, and how the Trail is used and valued.

This Strategy provides the framework, principles, priorities, and guidance necessary to build upon the previous efforts of each of the organizations that have supported the ORMT in the past while also moving into the future with a renewed sense of purpose and partners. The strategy charts a path forward where the quality and sustainability of existing trails are protected, investments in expanding the trails network are executed strategically, and all organizations involved in the protection, development, and expansion of the trail network are effectively supported.

This strategy intends to define a shared vision for the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail and to build upon work done in the past. It will create a new avenue for people to connect with the Moraine, learn about the histories that have impacted it and bring new energy and excitement to the idea of a continuous, world-class trail across the Moraine. If this Strategy is successful, it will:

- Re-establish connections between partner agencies and clearly define their roles in supporting the Trail in the current context
- Centre opportunities for truth and reconciliation
- Energize a new generation of trail users, enthusiasts and people interested in conservation.
- Refocus efforts on consistently improving and connecting the Trail.
- Centre the Trail within a call to action to preserve and protect the Oak Ridges Moraine.
- Actualize the Trail's potential as a recognized economic, social, and environmental asset to the Province of Ontario and local and regional municipalities and;
- Identify funding and resources to sustain the Trail into the future.

At the centre of this Strategy is the recognition that all parties across the Moraine – municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities, land trusts and more, must work together to create a trail that lives up to the potential identified in this document. A fully connected, primarily off-road trail across the Moraine will provide significant benefits to First Nation communities whose territory the Trail is on and other Indigenous People, individual and community health, economic development and ecological preservation, but each gap in the Trail will degrade the user experience and diminish the unique value that the Trail can provide.

This Strategy is unique in that it is not aiming to create a completely new concept for a trail – with more than 30 years of history and support, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail already offers a high-quality hiking experience across much of the Moraine. With nearly 50% of the Trail's total length already off-road, this Strategy is building upon the efforts that have set the foundation for this Trail. As this Strategy is implemented, it will aim to extend the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Experience to the other half of the Trail, creating a route that is consistent, connected and instantly recognizable as one of Canada's Iconic Trails.





Chapter 2

Vision & Guiding Principles

- 2.1 Vision and Mission Statement
- 2.2 Strategic Objectives

2.1 Vision and Mission Statement

When it is completed, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will be one of Canada's most iconic trails. It will connect to two of Canada's other iconic trails - The Bruce Trail and The Trans Canada Trail - through Canada's most populous region, providing a uniquely natural experience in an increasingly urbanized landscape.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will take you across many of Ontario's great watersheds. It will provide experiences that allow residents of Ontario's rapidly growing urban areas to connect with nature, bringing the importance of the Moraine and its functions closer to home.

No matter where you are on the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Trail will always be close by. It will provide a remarkable experience regardless of whether you are going for a walk to recharge on your lunch break or embark on a multi-day journey across the entire Moraine. You will learn the histories of First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples and ways of knowing about the land, long silenced by colonization. It will connect communities, remind all Ontarians of the value of natural landscapes and invite users to play a part in protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine.



VISION

**Explore the lands
where the Rivers Begin**

OUR MISSION

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is a permanently protected nature trail corridor connecting people to the water, the lands, the history and the communities of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

2.2 Strategic Objectives

The Trail will achieve the vision through the pursuit of 7 Strategic Objectives.

1

Strengthen alignment, leadership, and collaboration of partners along the Oak Ridges Moraine, including the First Nations whose treaties and territories the Trail goes through.

2

Create opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation with First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples who would benefit from access to greenspace.

3

Invest in the Trail to create connections through greenspace that provide a consistent, accessible experience to safely connect First Nations Rights holders and all users to the Moraine's natural and cultural assets.

4

Secure and Maintain access to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail through partnerships with the Province of Ontario, municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities, landowners, and other agencies/ trail organizations.

5

Foster sustainable tourism and economic development in the communities and First Nations along the Trail and expand awareness of the Trail and the history of the land and peoples through enhanced wayfinding, branding, partnerships, and promotions.

6

Protect the natural heritage system through teaching, outreach and the development of programs that build personal connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and encompass a Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approach.

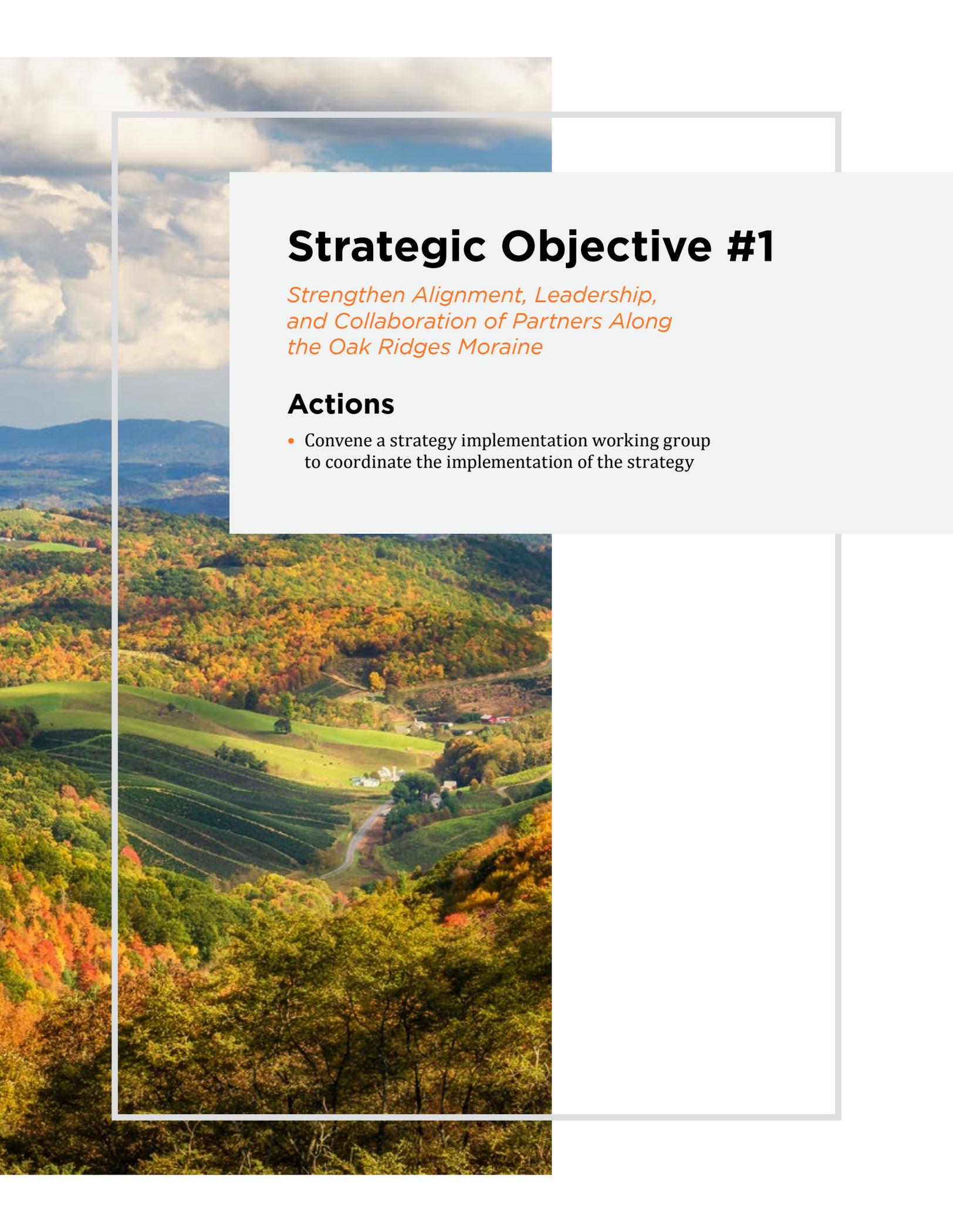
7

Connect the Trail to other trail networks across the length of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Each of these Strategic Objectives are supported by several Actions, which will allow the Trail to reach its Vision in the future. This Strategy is meant to be a document that provides high-level, long-term guidance for the ORMT – it should be referenced, reviewed, and revised as necessary to meet the needs of the Trail in the modern context.

Strategic Objectives & Actions

- 3.1 Strategic Objective #1: Strengthen Alignment, Leadership, and Collaboration of Partners Along the Oak Ridges Moraine
- 3.2 Strategic Objective #2: Create Opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation with Local First Nations and Indigenous Peoples
- 3.3 Strategic Objective #3: Invest in the Trail to Create Connections through Greenspace that Provide a Consistent, Accessible Experience to Safely Connect First Nations and All Users to The Moraine's Natural and Cultural Assets
- 3.4 Strategic Objective #4: Secure and Maintain Access to the Oak Ridges Moraine through Partnerships with Municipalities, First Nations, Conservation Authorities, Landowners and other Agencies/Trail Organizations
- 3.5 Strategic Objective #5: Foster Sustainable Tourism and Economic Development in Communities along the Trail and Expand Awareness of the Trail and Histories of the Land and People through Wayfinding, Branding and Promotions
- 3.6 Strategic Objective #6: Protect the Natural Heritage System of the Moraine Through Teaching, Outreach and the Development of Programs that Build Personal Connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine
- 3.7 Strategic Objective #7: Connect the Trail to other Trail Networks Across the Length of the Oak Ridges Moraine



Strategic Objective #1

*Strengthen Alignment, Leadership,
and Collaboration of Partners Along
the Oak Ridges Moraine*

Actions

- Convene a strategy implementation working group to coordinate the implementation of the strategy

3.1 Strategic Objective #1

Strengthen Alignment, Leadership, and Collaboration of Partners along the Oak Ridges Moraine

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail relies on partnerships and cooperation among multiple organizations with differing levels of both staff and volunteer support. At present, the Trail is located within the treaty lands of 8 First Nations and the traditional territories of others the boundaries of 12 local municipalities, 4 regional municipalities, 7 conservation authorities and multiple tracts of land owned or managed by land trusts or conservancies.

The Trail would not be what it is today without the perseverance of organizations such as ORTA, whose longstanding commitment has resulted in a trail that is longer and more consistent than it was a generation ago. Now, as the lands surrounding the Trail face even higher pressures due to development and the demand for outdoor recreational activities grows, there is a need for a new governance structure for the management of the Trail to define roles and responsibilities and create reciprocal relationships with First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples, while also generating interest and excitement over the Trail.

The governance recommendations contained here were informed through:

- a. Research of examples of successful multi-partner trail and sport organizations;
- b. Defining existing capacity, desire, and core mandates of partner agencies;
- c. Identifying wise practices and key example approaches and their benefits to management of a trail system; and
- d. Identifying potential gaps and needs in how the trails are “delivered”.

With a strong understanding of the factors that contribute to a successful multi-partner trail and an ongoing dialogue with the key delivery partners and rights holders, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is well positioned to see a period of significant expansion and improvement – helping to solidify its reputation as one of Ontario’s ‘must-see’ trails.

Multi-party Organizations: What can be Applied to the Trail?

While every organization is different, some reoccurring themes related to structure and approach emerged that can provide a foundational understanding to support the implementation of this Strategy moving forward.

First and foremost, the importance of **paid staff** in the organization and delivery of a multi-partner model emerged as a consistent identifier of success. Having the presence of someone whose role is to oversee the implementation of the Trail Strategy will be key to bringing the various agencies and partners together as the project moves forward. Some of the reviewed organizations operated with a shared funding model, where partners contributed annually to support the staffing needs of the governing body. Others relied on in-kind supports, leveraging existing resources within partner agencies to support the work of the governing body. While the final staffing model will be determined in conversations with partner agencies, it is recommended that a Program Manager and/or with capacity for Indigenous relations be hired through the ORMF to support the initiatives outlined in this Strategy and engage in further discussions about a contribution-based model to support the ongoing work of expanding the Trail in the future. This structure provides consistent funding for the organization while also creating a sense of ownership and responsibility among the various contributing partners.

The importance of **Ownership, Responsibility and Alignment with the Project Vision** is another foundational aspect of the background review that can be applied to the Trail. In all the models reviewed, the importance of having multiple parties around the table and taking ownership over the success of the project was central to the success of the organization. Additionally, mosaic governance models which focus on equity, inclusion and diversity, and Ethical Space and Two-Eyed Seeing approaches to collaboration and partnerships support Trail Strategy Objectives and partnership goals. Having provincial agencies, municipalities, First Nations and Indigenous organizations, conservation authorities, land trusts, trail volunteers and users, and other landowners participating in the decision-making process ensures that whenever opportunities might arise for trail improvements along the Moraine, those opportunities are less likely to be missed. The oversight and structured management of resources – be they financial, volunteer, human or land – is a key responsibility for any governing body for the Trail. Successful organizations provide high-level direction to local chapters or interest-based volunteer groups, empowering those ‘on the ground’ organizations to make localized decisions and take action. They also seek to build relations with Rights holders and honour participation by providing capacity. This alignment of high-level goals with bottom-up ownership over implementation supports the cultivation of strong relationships to both the organization and the Trail itself, supporting volunteer recruitment and fundraising efforts along the way.

For more information on the current state of governance, refer to **Appendix A**.

Precedent Models

Numerous precedent models of successful multi-partner trail and sport organizations were reviewed. Although not an exhaustive list, the following organizations provide a specific governance model structure that could be used to inform a new model for the ORM:

- Bruce Trail Conservancy
- P'Tit Train Du Nord
- Gawii Haanas National Park Reserve
- Hamilton Burlington Trail Council
- Credit Valley Trail
- Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark Alliance
- Trans Canada Trail Ontario (TCTO)
- National Parks Program, including Rouge National Urban Park

To learn more about each precedent, refer to **Appendix C**.

Wise Practice for Governance – Key Focus Areas

Based on a review of existing precedent models and wise practices of a variety of organizations, the following key elements have been identified for consideration in building a future governance structure for the ORMT.

In time, these are the components needed:



Governance Administration*



Funding and Finance*



Programs and Partnerships*



Land Acquisition and Securement*



Maintenance and Risk Identification



Marketing and Communication



Capital Projects

*Note: * denotes critical area to seek alignment in near term.*

The **Governance Administration Table** below outlines the key areas of focus and responsibilities, capacity needs, who should be engaged during the process, and the specific priorities achieved.

Governance Administration Table

Areas of Focus	Responsibilities	Capacity and Ability	Engage with ...	Achieve Each of These Priorities
<p>Governance Structure</p> <p>Oversee the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Network, ensuring policies are implemented by staff and volunteers as appropriate, reviewing SIWG and committee performance and succession.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General oversight to multi-partner model • Managing execution of strategy • Risk management • Policies & procedures • Volunteer recruitment • Advocacy and Government Relations • Succession planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid staff • Responsible & Consistent Volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenbelt Foundation • Strategy Implementation Working Group (SIWG) • First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples • Persons leading/organizing volunteers • Partners with overlapping jurisdiction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen alignment, leadership, and collaboration of partners along the Oak Ridges Moraine. 2. Create opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation with local First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples. 3. Invest in the Trail to create connections through greenspace that provide a consistent, accessible experience to safely connect First Nations and all users to the Moraine's natural and cultural assets. 4. Secure and maintain access to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail through partnerships with municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities, landowners and other agencies/trail organizations. 5. Foster sustainable tourism and economic development in communities including First Nations along the Trail and expand awareness of the Trail and history of the land and peoples through enhanced wayfinding, branding, partnerships, and promotions. 6. Protect the natural heritage system through teaching, outreach and the development of programs that build personal connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and encompass a Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approach. 7. Connect the Trail to other trails networks across the length of the Oak Ridges Moraine.
<p>Funding & Finance</p> <p>Identify and pursue sources of funding and other revenues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting and monitoring annual budget • Pursuit of grants • Fundraising • Sponsorship • Investment strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid staff • Responsible & Consistent Volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee/initiative organizers • Persons addressing maintenance actions • Partners/sponsors • Cost sharing partners such as: Conservation Authorities, Municipalities, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in the Trail to create connections through green space that provide a consistent, accessible experience to safely connect First Nations and all users to the Moraine's natural and cultural assets. 2. Connect the Trail to other trails networks across the length of the Oak Ridges Moraine 3. Create opportunities for action on Truth and Reconciliation with local First Nation and other Indigenous Peoples.

Areas of Focus	Responsibilities	Capacity and Ability	Engage with ...	Achieve Each of These Priorities
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Land Acquisition</p> <p>Assist the SIWG in acquiring properties to reach the goal of a permanently protected and secured natural corridor along the ORM that contains the Trail by, opening up dialogue with First Nations Rights holders and making recommendations to the working group on lands to be acquired and the terms and conditions of acquisitions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standard agreements • Develop maintenance & liability agreements • Pursing formal easements • Identify land for purchase • Monitor for ownership/ land use changes/ opportunities • Coordinate with Land Trusts • Landowner relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid staff recommended • Legal expertise • Experienced in developing agreements, contract management & negotiation • Ability to identify and monitor for opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landowners • Local First Nation Communities • Funding agencies • Conservation Authorities • Other organizations who are procuring/ securing land 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure and Maintain access to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail through partnerships with municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities, landowners and other agencies/ trail organizations. 2. Invest in the Trail to create connections through green space that provide a consistent, accessible experience to safely connect First Nations and all users to the Moraine's natural and cultural assets. 3. Protect the natural heritage system through teaching, outreach and the development of programs that build personal connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and encompass a Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approach. 4. Connect the Trail to other trails networks across the length of the Oak Ridges Moraine.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Programs and Partnerships</p> <p>Develop and oversee all programming for the ORMT, including partnerships, educational initiatives, promotional materials, recreation programming and event initiatives, and coordinating with organization partners.</p> <p>Develop volunteer resources, including volunteering orientation manual, training manual, Indigenous awareness training, health and safety information, incident reporting forms, and guide for trail workers.</p> <p>Oversee all volunteers including recruitment, training, and policies/ procedures and working closely with the ORTA chapters for support and guidance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short- & long-term event programming • Recreation programming such as guided hikes. • Program and engagement activities inclusive of First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples • Volunteer management • Coordinating with organization partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize & execute • Engage user base • Close geographical connection to the Trail • Leverage volunteers • Indigenous Awareness Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers • ORTA Chapters • Conservation Authorities • Municipalities • First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples • Community grassroots organizations • Schools/Ecology groups 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in the Trail to create connections through green space that provide a consistent, accessible experience to safely connect First Nations and users to the Moraine's natural and cultural assets. 2. Protect the natural heritage system through teaching, outreach and the development of programs that build personal connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and encompass a Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approach. 3. Create opportunities for action on Truth and Reconciliation with local First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples.

Areas of Focus	Responsibilities	Capacity and Ability	Engage with ...	Achieve Each of These Priorities
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Maintenance and Risk Identification</p> <p>Review and coordinate trail maintenance reports, making recommendations based on insurance policies, and ensuring oversight and review of the trail audits and monitoring the completion rates of the trail status reports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk mitigation and risk analysis • Maintain and monitor a risk registry and revise as needed • Coordinate trail audits • Identify & prioritize maintenance actions including activities based on harvesting and traditional and cultural practices (i.e., burning) • Coordinate maintenance volunteers • Coordinate landowner maintenance actions • Support development of maintenance liability agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid staff recommended • Legal expertise • Experienced in developing agreements, contract management & negotiation • Ability to identify and monitor for opportunities • Training on Indigenous stewardship practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers • Conservation Authorities • Regional & Local Municipalities • First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples • Trail users • Persons assigned to finance and risk management 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster sustainable tourism and economic development in communities including First Nations, along the Trail and expand awareness of the Trail and the history of the land and peoples through enhanced wayfinding, branding, partnerships, and promotions. 2. Protect the natural heritage system through teaching, outreach and the development of programs that build personal connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and encompass a Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approach. 3. Connect the Trail to other trails networks across the length of the Oak Ridges Moraine.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Marketing and Communication</p> <p>Identify market opportunities and customer segments for the ORMT and SIWG to target while building the ORMT's deliverables and executing them.</p> <p>Brand management, including the development of a branding and communications strategy for the ORMT and ensuring uniformity across all levels of the organization (i.e.: logo, graphics, social media, etc.)</p> <p>Annual research on market trends and successful programming opportunities by other trail precedents.</p> <p>Promote all programming and events to bring people to the Trail.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion • Website • Social media • Guidebook • Trail Talk newsletter • Support sponsorships • Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid staff &/ or experienced volunteer(s) • Marketing, promotion, and communication • Translation to incorporate Indigenous languages • Design programs i.e.: Adobe Suites, Canva, Power Point, etc. • Understanding of market, users, and ability to identify new opportunities to engage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples • Conservation Authorities • Municipalities • Regional Tourism Organizations • Community organizations • General public 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster sustainable tourism and economic development in communities, including First Nations along the Trail and expand awareness of the Trail and the history of the land and peoples through enhanced wayfinding, branding, partnerships, and promotions. 2. Protect the natural heritage system through teaching, outreach and the development of programs that build personal connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and encompass Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approaches.

Areas of Focus	Responsibilities	Capacity and Ability	Engage with ...	Achieve Each of These Priorities
<p>Capital Projects</p> <p>Construction projects across the Trail, coordinating with ORTA and developing forecasting models for trail development/ execution.</p> <p>Project delivery, including sourcing consultants, contractors, etc. as needed, reviewing maintenance reports and planning for annual maintenance requirements, and coordinating project implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major lifecycle renewal & replacement projects • New construction projects • Monitoring project forecasts • Construction management • Coordinating project implementation • Employment for First Nations Rights holders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid staff (external or internal) • Responsible & consistent volunteers (i.e.: board member) • Experience in project management & construction • Skilled in time management, budget allocation, communication, monitoring & reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Authorities • Municipal partners • First Nations Rights holders • External consultants • Contractors • Volunteers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster sustainable tourism and economic development in communities, including First Nations along the Trail and expand awareness of the Trail and the history of the land and peoples through enhanced wayfinding, branding, partnerships, and promotions. 2. Invest in the Trail to create connections through green space that provide a consistent, accessible experience to safely connect First Nations rights holders and users to the Moraine's natural and cultural assets. 3. Connect the Trail to other trails networks across the length of the Oak Ridges Moraine

Action 1: Convene a Strategy Implementation Working Group to Coordinate the Implementation of the Strategy

The Strategy Implementation Working Group (SIWG) role is to be the caretaker of the Strategy, overseeing implementation of the action items listed in this document. Proposed membership in this working group includes a representative from the following organizations:

- Greenbelt Foundation
- Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust
- Oak Ridges Trail Association
- Green Durham/ ORTA
- Other land trusts: Mno Aki Land Trust, Northumberland Land Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Municipal and Regional Representatives (Northumberland, Uxbridge with space held to extend invitations to the other municipalities located within the ORM and along the Trail).
- Local First Nations Rights holders and those whose traditional territories the Trail lies within
- Conservation Authorities (i.e.: TRCA, CVC)
- Regional Tourism Organization - Central counties
- Youth initiatives such as Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) Youth Council, EcoSpark, Indigenous Guardians
- Landowner Representative
- Trail User Representative

It is suggested that an invitation be extended to the Bruce Trail Conservancy for representation in the SIWG to provide additional guidance on that organization's experiences in developing a similar trail in Ontario.

Space should be held, and invitations extended to Provincial representation, such as Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Tourism Culture and Sport, Municipal Affairs and Housing and Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs.

Working under the leadership of the Greenbelt Foundation and the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, the SIWG will:

- Confirm and finalize a permanent governance structure for the Trail which, when established, will guide and oversee the implementation and next steps of this Strategy from the Foundations.
- Provide strategic advice and leadership in establishing priorities based on greatest needs and benefits and establish and support a Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approach to implementation of the Trail Strategy.
- Encourage alignment and communication of the trail partners and trail community with the Strategy and understand capacity needs.
- Encourage stakeholder groups to connect, align visions and plans, share knowledge, resources and wise practices.
- Provide opportunities for ongoing conversations with First Nations and other Indigenous partners and build respectful and reciprocal relations,
- Provide opportunity for trail stakeholders to plan and coordinate trail network planning at the municipal, regional, and provincial level.
- Connect landowners and those with experience in landowner relations to share knowledge and wise practices related to trail securement, maintenance and managing liability, among other topics.
- Create roles and responsibilities for each trail stakeholder, partner and any external advisory group members for aspects of implementing the Strategy.
- Monitor, measure, and report on progress implementing the Strategy.

Specific Steps:

- a. Establish a strategy implementation working group (SIWG) (i.e.: a new entity or mix of key players to fill roles and responsibilities of key focus areas) and draft terms of reference for the SIWG. Membership in the coordinating group should be broad and representative of the Trail's community and First Nations Rights holders.

- b. Establish a short-term workplan to achieve the key priorities as outlined in the Strategy.

- c. Finalize a governance structure and committee mandates/ purpose (i.e.: Governance Committee, Human Resources Committee, Finance and Risk Committee, Land Acquisition Committee, etc. as applicable)

- d. Identify the processes and structures needed to fulfill the role and responsibilities listed in the Governance Administration table above.

- e. Identify the process and structures needed to continue open dialogue and engagement with First Nations Rights holders, those whose territories the Trail lies with, and other Indigenous Peoples and organizations for future planning, design, and implementation.

As the governance model moves towards a permanent structure, it will also be important to establish clear lines of communication between the Trail's governing body and any committees, trail partners or other bodies. In addition, the participation of youth from across the Moraine i.e., the creation of an ORMT Youth Council, should be considered once the SIWG completes its work.





Strategic Objective #2

Create Opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation with Local First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples

Actions

- Seek to build relations with First Nations Rights holders and invite and support participation in trail governance
 - Expand and support ceremonial and harvesting access on trail lands
 - Define visual aspects of the Trail, including branding, wayfinding and plaques that are reflective of First Nations' histories
 - Create opportunities for Indigenous-led stewardship
- 

3.2 Strategic Objective #2

Create opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation with Local First Nations and Indigenous Peoples

The land upon which the Oak Ridges Moraine rests is the treaty territory of the Anishinaabe People, specifically the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Williams Treaties First Nations. The land is also the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat and now home to many Indigenous Peoples. Connections to the land and water are central to the history and continued presence of the Anishinaabe People and the Trail presents an opportunity to share the culture, traditions and history of local First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples in a way that reflects on the past and challenges settlers to imagine a path forward based on a shared vision of Reconciliation.

It is important to recognize that the creation of opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation is the responsibility of settlers. An initial act of reconciliation will be to create Ethical Space on the SIWG. As the Trail Strategy is implemented actions should be developed in collaboration with First Nations Rights holders and other Indigenous Peoples and be based on reciprocity and a shared understanding of the value of these spaces. Implementation should also encompass a Two-Eyed Seeing approach.

Action 1: Seek to Build Relations with First Nations Rights Holders and Invite and Support Participation in Trail Governance

When reviewing successful partnerships between First Nations and agencies developing trails or open spaces, there was a wide range of governance models and some common features such as the creation of an Indigenous Round Table or advisory body to guide measures as they move towards implementation. Governance structures will be determined in collaboration with First Nations

Rights holders, whose treaty territory the Trail resides, inviting other Indigenous partners as requested. The interim SIWG and future permanent Trail governance structure will guide the implementation of all Strategic Objectives and actions outlined in the Trail Strategy including trail alignment, policies and programs related to land access and use, community programming and training to steward the land and create strong connections to the Moraine, resource and funding plans, support for Trail economies, and a visual identity/branding, wayfinding, design of signage, plaques and markets, and promotion of the Trail.

The successful development of the Credit Valley Trail's Indigenous Round Table and Indigenous Experience Implementation Guide provides an example of a partnership based on reciprocity and a shared understanding of the value of these spaces.

The Round Table provides support and guidance in identifying culturally significant areas along the Trail, incorporates traditional knowledge of the area, and improves archaeological evidence collection along the Trail route, supporting preservation of history and culture.

Finally, the Round Table identifies and engages Indigenous artists, designers and practitioners to support the implementation of collaborative projects to raise the visibility of Indigenous People along the Trail.

Action 2: Expand and Prioritize Ceremonial and Harvesting Access on Trail Lands

Access to Trail lands for harvest and ceremony are sacred rights enshrined in treaties. These rights have historically gone unrecognized. The Trail can support the recognition of these rights by centring the importance of access to land and ceremonial and harvesting rights in the implementation of the Trail Strategy. This could be through the adoption of high-level trail policies or principles, agreements with landowners, ongoing efforts to secure lands for the Trail, or other activities.

Action 3: Define Visual Aspects of the Trail, including Branding, Wayfinding and Plaques that are Reflective of First Nations' Histories

Given the historical erasure of Indigenous presence in the creation of interpretive signage across Ontario, it is of vital importance that the physical objects that mark the presence of the Trail (such as signs, trail blazes and trailheads) also help to remind people of the historic and ongoing presence of Indigenous People on these lands. The Trail also presents an opportunity to strengthen the partnership between the Greenbelt Foundation and the Moccasin Identifier Project to elevate the visibility of First Nations Communities and other Indigenous People on the Oak Ridges Moraine and share the stories, history, and aspirations of First Nations partners on their own terms – helping to unsettle the colonial history that is often elevated through plaques and other markers along trails.

Connected to the goal of enhancing the visibility of Indigenous People, the Trail can also serve as a tool to raise awareness about the Treaties that intimately tie settler governments to First Nations. Treaty awareness is a simple, highly impactful way of advancing Truth and Reconciliation, and should be considered as the Trail moves forward.

Action 4: Create Opportunities for Indigenous-led Stewardship

Indigenous People have been stewards of the land, waters and non-human inhabitants of Turtle Island since time immemorial. This has resulted in unique knowledge and ways of understanding that should be championed when discussing land management initiatives such as conservation methods. There are emerging models of Indigenous-led stewardship tools that could be explored as the Trail moves forward, including the use of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) or through discussions about Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) with the relevant First Nations. Wherever possible, Indigenous partners should be empowered to lead conservation efforts along the Trail and should have the support of other partners to manage lands adjacent to the Trail as they see fit.



Strategic Objective #3

Invest in the Trail to Create Connections through Greenspace that Provide a Consistent, Accessible Experience to Safely Connect First Nations and All Users to the Moraine's Natural and Cultural Assets

Actions

- Identify and confirm the preferred trail alignment and user experience
- Confirm trail design and construction standards with landowners, First Nations, and other partners
- Delineate the user experience and visitor needs in key sections of the Trail
- Work with municipal partners, First Nations, conservation authorities and other stakeholders to fund and install trail amenities and signage that contribute to a safe, comfortable and accessible trail user experience
- Identify requirements and establish a funding strategy that includes staffing resources to build partnerships and secure additional funds for the Trail
- Prioritize trail projects and investments based on need, capital project forecasting and opportunistic expansion
- Establish and promote the value of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail to communities along the Trail, to Ontario's natural heritage systems and to future generations
- Pursue future funding sources to establish and maintain sustained investments for the ORMT and continue to explore new opportunities annually

3.3 Strategic Objective #3

Invest in the Trail to Create Connections through Greenspace that Provide a Consistent, Accessible Experience to Safely Connect First Nations and All Users to the Moraine’s Natural and Cultural Assets

For the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail to take its place as one of Ontario’s most recognizable trails, the Trail must provide a consistent and exceptional experience for users. The Trail, which is one of only three trails identified in Provincial Planning Documents (alongside the Bruce Trail and the Waterfront Trail), has the potential to be a destination hiking experience in Ontario, but it is necessary to clearly define the desired experience for users and to make strategic investments to bring the Trail up to a consistent standard. The Trail will require land, design efforts and materials to improve the Trail experience, so this section of the Strategy focuses on defining how those investments should be prioritized to make the Trail more accessible and enjoyable for all users and centre opportunities for truth and reconciliation.

Because this Strategic Objective contains a significant number of actions, it is helpful to break down the actions into three key thematic areas. Those themes are:

- a. Confirm Preferred Trail Alignment and User Experience
- b. Develop a Resourcing Plan
- c. Secure Funding and Support



Theme A: Confirm the Preferred Trail Alignment and User Experience

Action 1: Identify and Confirm the Preferred Alignment for the Trail

Based on user experience criteria including opportunities to support reconciliation, the existing trail alignment, land ownership and potential partnerships, the SIWG should work to confirm a Preferred Trail Alignment **within 18 months** of this Strategy being adopted. For recreational purposes, the user target is walkers, including hikers, joggers and runners. Additionally, First Nations Communities and other Indigenous Peoples may have interest in accessing Trail lands for ceremony, spiritual or healing purposes, and gathering and harvesting activities. The alignment will guide much of the efforts that follow in this strategy, including supporting municipal partners, First Nations and conservation authorities and guiding land acquisition priorities. Once the preferred alignment is finalized, there should be a target date established for completion of the Trail to build excitement, guide investment and track progress.

Specific Steps:

- a. Finalize User Experience Criteria and develop a Preferred Trail Alignment in collaboration with SIWG members, local and regional municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial agencies and First Nations.
- b. Use the preferred alignment to inform Actions in Strategic Objective #4, including the development of a Land Acquisition Strategy.
- c. Use the Land Acquisition Strategy to determine priorities for investment.
- d. Clearly identify goals to move routes off road based on the Land Acquisition Strategy and the availability of resources.



Action 2: Confirm Trail Design and Construction Standards with Landowners, First Nations and Other Partners

The ORMT crosses multiple jurisdictions and First Nations territory and involves partnerships with public and private entities which have varying capacities and knowledge of trail design and construction standards. To provide a consistent recreation experience on the Trail, it is important to develop standards that serve as the baseline level of experience that trail users can expect. Agencies with more capacity or experience may have their own standards that go above and beyond the ORMT design standards, but the creation of Trail Design Guidelines to plan, design, and construct trails along the ORMT network will help to ensure a consistent user experience across the entire Moraine.

It is important when developing and applying guidelines to consider the characteristics and preferences of potential recreation users (target users, accommodated users, and alternative users) and their user experience. These users may include potential users' groups such as pedestrians/hikers, cyclists, cross county skiers/snowshoers, pet owners/walkers, equestrians, and users with mobility aids.

For recreation, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will remain primarily a hiking trail with increased accessible locations at key destination access points to improve access to all. The primary target user for the Trail is people walking. Cyclists, mountain bikes, and other wheeled (non-motorized) users will be defined as accommodated users. As a result, the default design standards for the ORMT will be aligned with either a Recreational Trail (preferred) or a Wilderness Trail.

Specific Steps:

- a. Clearly identify the specific recreation target user for the ORMT as people walking, including hikers, joggers and runners. Determine what their needs are (trail width, surface material, access points, etc.), and how much access/ which trails are available for their use.
- b. Define that accommodated users are to be people with disabilities, people on bikes and other non-motorized users.
- c. Review all Trail Design documents from agencies along the Trail to determine alignment.
- d. Develop and distribute a Trails Design Manual to all organizations involved in the planning and construction of the trails. Review and assess trail facilities for barrier free path of travel standards and create a trail type hierarchy (type of trail, trail facilities in natural areas vs. within road corridors), and address problem areas.
- e. Establish a "planning share" where knowledge from all of those invested in the trail network are captured and documented, which can then be used to create various manuals (maintenance, landowner relations, partnerships, marketing and promotion, etc.).
- f. Establish feedback mechanisms and opportunities for collaboration between agencies and First Nations involved in trail planning, construction, and maintenance.

Action 3: Delineate the User Experience and Visitor Needs in Key sections of the Trail

While the recreation design for the Trail accounts for the needs of people walking in areas of high connectivity, there should be consideration for how wheeled users, including cyclists, wheelchair users, electric scooters and other mobility devices can be accommodated. Particularly near parking lots and other important destinations, it is important to provide barrier-free access for users to make areas of the Trail more accessible. Where trails are developed to be accessible to all recreational users, engaging these users for input to determine the type of trail surface and width they require should be conducted and included in the design guidelines.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail should be designed to prioritize the comfort of non-motorized users, with motorized access being limited along the Trail, especially ATVs and dirt bikes, particularly during the Spring, Summer, and Autumn. It is recognized that much of the Trail currently exists on publicly owned lands such as Conservation Authorities where there are pre-existing regulations about motorized users. Where new lands or trails are secured, preference should be given to non-motorized use and access. The exception to this rule may be in the creation of a Winter Usage Strategy for the Trail, which could involve the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC). The OFSC has played an important role in the construction of similar hiking trails across Ontario, so a partnership model may be beneficial to both agencies.

As the Trail is implemented, there should be a review of existing OFSC trails to determine where those existing routes could be leveraged as part of the ORMT and clear definition of the role these groups play in the ORMT. Other Winter Use agencies, including Nordic Clubs and Snowshoeing Clubs, should also be involved in the development of a Winter Usage Strategy to identify where trails could be developed and shared.

Beyond recreation, other user experience criteria, specifically experiences that support reconciliation and the interest of First Nations Communities and other Indigenous Peoples, should further be used to delineate experiences and visitor needs across the Trail.

Specific Steps:

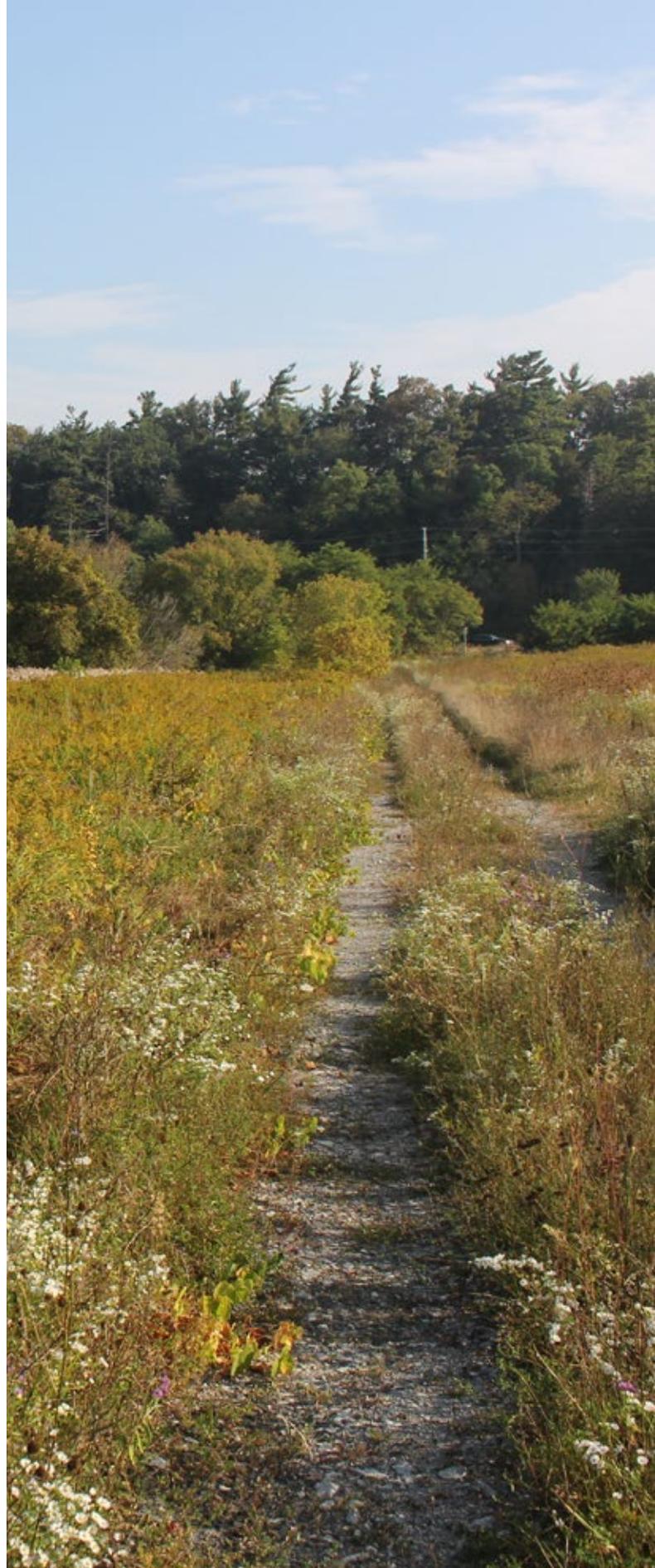
- a. With the primary recreation target and accommodated users in mind, review the trail routes and access points to determine which areas should be classified as “barrier-free”.
- b. Understand the potential for Indigenous user experiences such as ceremony and harvesting activities on the Trail and understand how these uses might be supported.
- c. Communicate expectations of the trail experience to users. Let them know what to expect in advance by defining activities and opportunities clearly, including barrier-free areas, in mapping and signage and outlining the expected user experience in those locations.
- d. Review all sections of the Trail to identify which sections currently permit motorized use. Work with landowners to improve trail users’ experience by limiting motorized use where possible.
- e. Initiate a Winter Usage Strategy by identifying winter recreation users of Trail connections, connecting with Snowmobile clubs to evaluate routes for inclusion in the Trail and developing three-season access agreements with relevant agencies and landowners. Also identify winter activities that can support opportunities for reconciliation.

Action 4: Work with Municipal Partners, First Nations, Conservation Authorities and other Stakeholders to Fund and Install Trail Amenities and Signage that Contribute to a Safe, Comfortable and Accessible Trail User Experience

While the installation of signage and wayfinding will be primarily managed by the Trail, installing amenities such as seating and rest areas will primarily occur in areas of higher usage, which are likely to be near parking access, close to urban areas or in conservation areas. In these areas, the responsibility for installing amenities will rest with the landowner, with the Trail playing a supporting role in providing funding and guidance regarding preferred locations for amenities.

Specific Steps:

- a. Map existing user amenities along the Trail.
- b. Develop an Amenities Plan for key areas of the Trail and identify priorities for future investment including amenities that support recreational users and opportunities for reconciliation.



Theme B: Develop a Resourcing Plan for the Trail

Action 5: Identify Requirements and Establish a Funding Strategy that includes Staffing Resources to Build Partnerships, support First Nation Participation, and Secure Additional Funds for the Trail

Leveraging volunteers is a great way to build support, create a sense of ownership, develop a strong trail community, and share resources/knowledge. Managing a trail that crosses as many jurisdictional boundaries and requires coordination of complex planning and partnership efforts, however, is outside the scope of what is typically possible when relying on volunteer efforts. Key to the success of the Trail moving forward will be the identification of necessary staffing levels to support the ongoing efforts to improve the Trail, which will also include the identification of preferred funding sources to maintain those staffing levels.

Dedicated staff resources will support the planning, data collection and management, partnership building, coordinating stewardship and public outreach, communications, and other activities related to the Trail, bringing significant benefits to the partner organizations and communities involved with the Trail. It will be important for all partners to ‘play their part’ in supporting these staffing resources on an ongoing, long-term basis to ensure that the momentum for improving the Trail is not lost. These long-term partnerships will need to be clearly defined as the Strategy is implemented and should be revisited regularly to ensure that the resources are meeting the needs of the Trail.

In addition to seeking support for staffing, the Trail should also look to build ongoing partnerships with municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities and other partners to continuously invest in the Trail. The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will bring more benefits to the communities along the Moraine as it becomes more consistent, more recognized and more connected, so it is in all parties’ interests to invest in the Trail to create a high-quality trail experience.

Specific Steps:

- a. Determine key staffing responsibilities necessary for the early stages of implementation of the Strategy and identify necessary resources to meet those responsibilities. Determine the appropriate level of staff resources required and seek funding from partners to hire those resources. Paid staff and responsibilities can be part of the 'partner ask' where a portion of the staffers time is allocated to the ORMT. Draw on existing knowledge and seek out specialized knowledge sharing (this could be a dedicated staff member or staff-share with existing resources). Example partners include: Municipalities, First Nations, Conservation Authorities, Greenbelt Foundation, Land Trusts, and Service Clubs.

- b. Identify roles and responsibilities for support staff and create a prioritization of positions to gradually scale up the staffing capacity of the Trail over time.

- c. Develop a value proposition / business case for investment in ORMT staff support for various agencies, including municipalities, conservation authorities and other partners and seek ongoing funding agreements to support ORMT staff positions.

- d. Seek ongoing funding for capital improvements and maintenance to the Trail from all partner agencies.

- e. Provide annual or semi-annual reports to funding partners outlining how investments are being used to benefit the Trail.

- f. In conjunction with reporting, review resourcing needs annually to modify partnership requests based on priorities and changes in capacity at the Trail organization.

Resourcing Needs

In the early stages of the implementation of the Strategy, supporting the SIWG will be vital to the ongoing success of the Trail. To direct the efforts of the SIWG and ensure important aspects of the Strategy move forward, the SIWG and the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation should pursue funding for a full-time Project Manager for the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail for a two-year contract. Capacity to build relations with First Nations Rights holders and support outreach and engagement of First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples in Trail activities should also be funded. The Project Manager and additional capacity would support the key areas identified in the Strategy during the first two years, including:

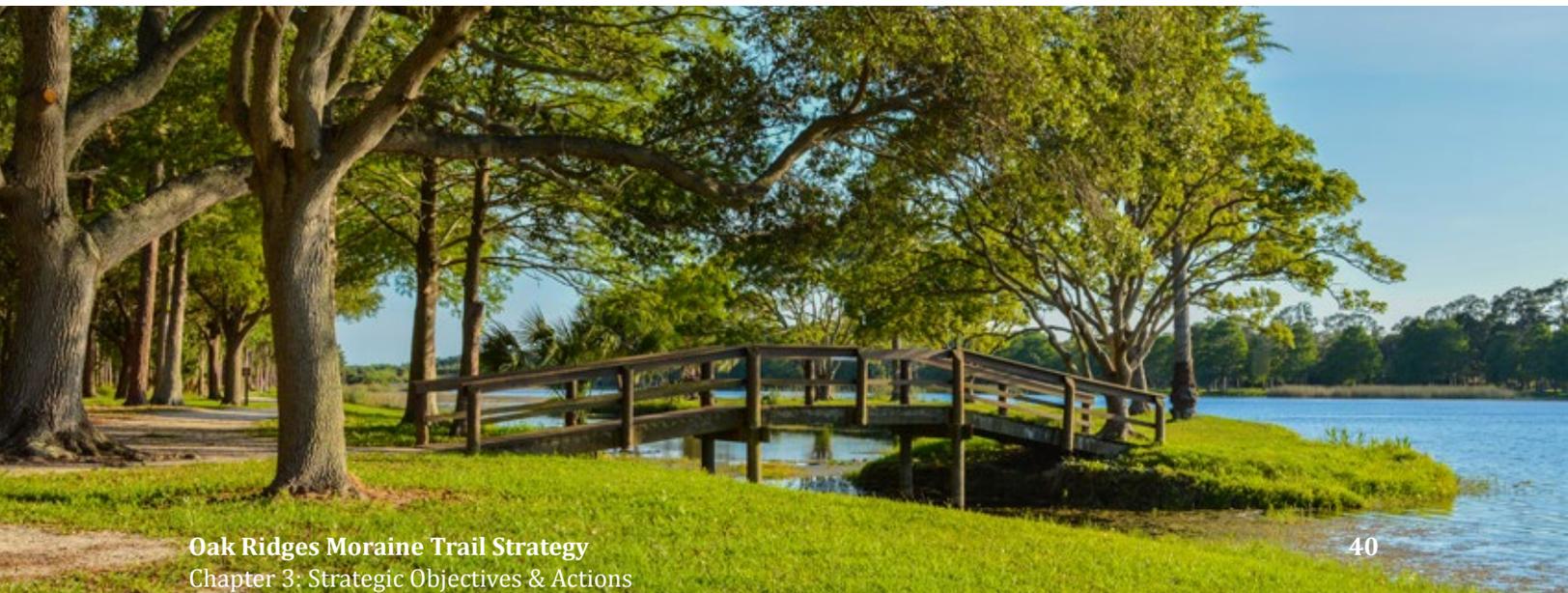
- Finalizing the governance model and securing agreements from all relevant parties, including First Nation Rights holders
- Refining the Preferred Trail Alignment
- Integrating the preferred alignment and Trail-supportive policy language into all relevant planning documents along the Moraine
- Outreach and engagement of First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples
- Undertaking a branding exercise for the ORMT
- Pursuing funding and other resources to support the ongoing implementation of the Strategy
- Identifying and integrating opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation into these priorities

Action 6: Prioritize Trail Projects and Investments based on Need, Capital Project Forecasting and Opportunistic Expansion

With the preferred trail alignment and staffing needs identified, the Trail can begin to develop a prioritized list of projects and investments that can guide funding needs in the short, medium and long term. For the Trail to secure funding, it will be important to clearly communicate how the funding will be used, and how it will connect to the broader goals both of this Strategy and the goals of partners. The prioritized list should account for upcoming capital works being undertaken by partners along the preferred trail alignment where improvements to the Trail could be integrated into existing plans, but should also identify ‘standalone’ priorities that fill important gaps in the existing Trail, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation such as harvesting and ceremony grounds. Finally, funding forecasting should account for ongoing maintenance and replacement costs of trail facilities to ensure that the user experience remains consistent over time.

Specific Steps:

- a. Identify priority gaps along the Preferred Trail Alignment where short-term investment would create a high-value connection.
- b. Liaise with First Nations and partner agencies to review capital forecasts and development plans to identify opportunities for trail expansion or improvement within previously planned projects.
- c. Develop a capital project forecast with a list of short, medium and long-term projects for trail expansion or improvement, including the identification of projects that would require land securement and create opportunities for Truth and Reconciliation.
- d. Determine roles and responsibilities for trail construction on public land (i.e. municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial lands) and private or procured lands to include in the project forecast, including role and responsibilities of First Nations Rights holders.
- e. Identify lifecycle costs for existing and future trails and establish a trail maintenance funding request.
- f. Report on and review investment and construction priorities annually with partner agencies to maintain open communications and transparency.



Theme C:

Secure Funding and Support for the Trail

Action 7: Establish and Promote the Value of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail to Communities Along the Trail, to Ontario’s Natural Heritage Systems and to Future Generations

Completing the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail to a standard that is envisioned in this Strategy will take significant investment, and it is vital for funders to have a clear understanding of the value that their investments will bring. Countless studies have clearly demonstrated the value of high-quality trails systems, but it is still necessary to clearly communicate what makes the ORMT unique to secure the level of funding and support that will be required to achieve this Strategy’s Vision.

As a premier hiking destination, the ORMT will provide access to outdoor recreation, connection to the land and opportunities for reconciliation, tourism, and improvements in both physical and mental well-being in every community it touches. Stories, actions and programming will tell the rich histories of Indigenous Peoples that have shaped this landscape. The Trail clearly aligns with the high-level objectives of municipalities across the Moraine, especially as a growing number of residents are requesting access to high quality outdoor public spaces. Making the case for the Trail is a vital first step in building ongoing funding partnerships, so efforts should be taken to quantify the benefits of the Trail and tie the objectives of this Strategy to the planning and policy objectives of all partner agencies.

Specific Steps:

-
- a. Present the ORMT Strategy to all Municipal Councils, First Nations and Conservation Authority boards, outlining how the Strategy’s goals align with their existing policy priorities.
-
- b. Investigate and promote the economic benefits of the Trail to surrounding regions, municipalities and First Nations through partnerships with tourism organizations and visitor surveys.
-
- c. Develop a capital project forecast with a list of short, medium and long-term projects for trail expansion or improvement, including the identification of projects that would require land securement.

Action 8: Pursue Future Funding Sources to Establish and Maintain Sustained Investments for the Trail and Continue to Explore New Opportunities Annually

With the Trail's value proposition established and investment priorities defined, seeking funding becomes the next step in the process to create a high-quality experience across the Moraine. The Trail should monitor funding sources to determine where existing resources (such as ongoing funding from partner agencies) can be leveraged to secure additional funding support. The Trail should diversify its funding sources to include ongoing support (including memberships, municipal funding etc), special events and funding applications to sources from other levels of government or private sector sources. The Trail should also work with municipal partners to identify avenues to include funding for the Trail in the development application process, and clearly identifying the value that the Trail brings to developments along the preferred alignment and beyond. Discussions with First Nations and Indigenous organizations are important and can present additional opportunities and insights on funding opportunities and partnerships.

A review of funding options was conducted to identify different options available. The SIWG is encouraged to monitor available funding opportunities and utilize the information contained within this plan to support funding applications. The following is a list of potential funding sources that could be explored. It is important for ORMT partners to seek a diverse range of funding sources for the various initiatives and programs highlighted in this plan and external sources are an effective way to reduce ORMT costs while being an opportunity to develop new partnerships. Funding is available for Indigenous-led initiatives in all sectors that could be pursued through established respectful and reciprocal relationships.

Potential Funding Sources:

Donations/Sponsorships/Memberships

- Funds received through ORMT and/or trail donation boxes; donations, sponsorships, and in-kind gifts received from volunteer trail associations, the public, and the private sector, and donations directly through the municipality.
- For example, private citizen donations/bequeaths; membership style programs that offer benefits, however, are not a user requirement; corporate sponsorships (adopt-a-trail).

Government Grants

- Single injection grant funding is typically a one-time application that must be re-applied for annually.
- Municipal, provincial, and/or federal funding.

Government Infrastructure Programs

- Provincial or federal funding programs.
- Opportunity to partner with municipal applications.

Revenues

- Programming and event fees, trail guidebook, membership fees, etc.

Public – Private Partnerships

- Co-operative funding arrangements and site-specific developer agreements.
- Development of agreements for access (Conservation Authorities and municipalities) i.e.: Wave fees for ORTA members for parking.

Pay-per-use

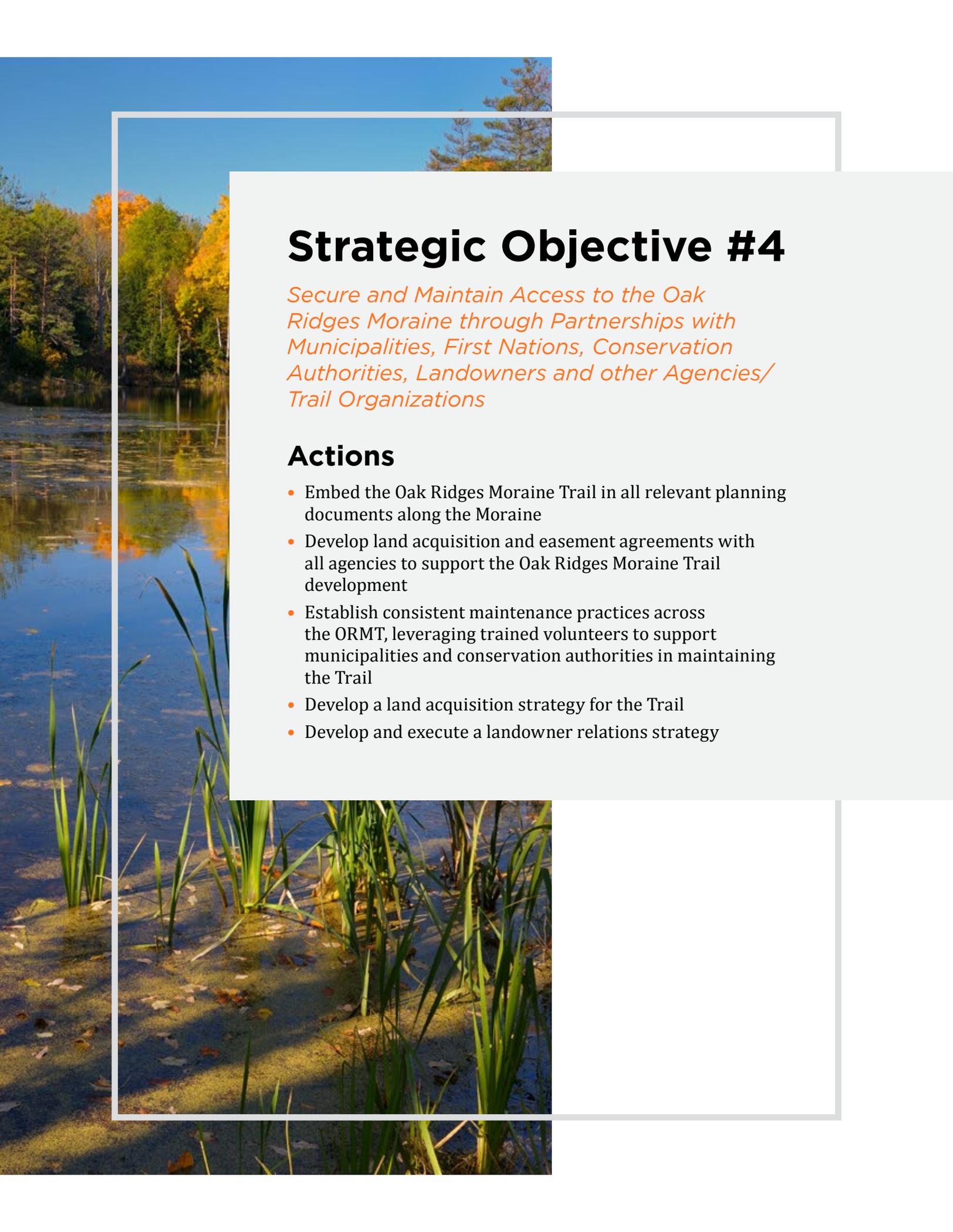
- Trail user fees (parking and membership fees).

Funding should be sought from municipal partners to aid in the development, maintenance, and infrastructure projects along their section of the Trail. A list of potential external funding sources is listed in **Appendix D**. They are subject to change and should be reviewed again prior to applications.

Specific Steps:

- a. Review external funding options and monitor available funding sources and supports available.
- b. Seek a diverse range of funding sources for the various initiatives and programs highlighted in this Strategy and utilize the information to support funding applications.
- c. Evaluate the potential of improving ORTA membership through in-kind support from various partners (for example, free parking for members at Conservation Areas) to increase membership funding.
- d. Incorporate funding and support opportunities with Municipalities to leverage the development process to secure trail project funding and implementation opportunities.





Strategic Objective #4

Secure and Maintain Access to the Oak Ridges Moraine through Partnerships with Municipalities, First Nations, Conservation Authorities, Landowners and other Agencies/ Trail Organizations

Actions

- Embed the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail in all relevant planning documents along the Moraine
- Develop land acquisition and easement agreements with all agencies to support the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail development
- Establish consistent maintenance practices across the ORMT, leveraging trained volunteers to support municipalities and conservation authorities in maintaining the Trail
- Develop a land acquisition strategy for the Trail
- Develop and execute a landowner relations strategy

3.4 Strategic Objective #4

Secure and Maintain Access to the Oak Ridges Moraine through Partnerships with Municipalities, First Nations, Conservation Authorities, Landowners and other Agencies/Trail Organizations

Travelling through treaty lands and the traditional territories of First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples, 16 local municipalities, 4 regional municipalities and lands overseen by 7 conservation authorities, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will rely on land acquisition, local ownership, partnerships, access agreements and a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the Trail. The Trail should have a prominent place in local and regional planning documents, as well as planning documents for conservation authorities and relevant First Nations plans. With a policy foundation in place to support the Trail across the entire Moraine, land acquisition and easement agreements can be developed and refined to acquire and protect lands necessary to complete the Trail.

The details of these policy elements will guide how partnerships with First Nations and public, private, and local stakeholders will come together, defining roles and responsibilities for expanding and improving the Trail. As these conversations between partners occur, the Trail organization will make efforts to codify and document important aspects of the partnership process, including the establishment of wise maintenance practices and agreements and the development of a landowner relations strategy that recognizes the important role that landowners will play in securing the Trail for the use of all peoples and future generations.

Action 1: Embed the Oak Ridges Moraine in all Relevant Planning Documents along the Moraine

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail must be embedded in the local planning policies of upper- and lower-tier and single tier municipal documents across the Moraine to provide the necessary policy support to see the Trail expanded and improved. As a trail already identified in a Provincial Policy document, the ORMT should be included in all plans in communities where the Trail exists, or where the preferred alignment is proposed. Partnerships with municipalities, First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples and organizations, and conservation authorities to support trail construction, maintenance and preservation will be key to the future of the Trail, so laying a strong policy foundation is important to provide clarity and consistency across the Moraine. The Trail provides a tangible opportunity for municipalities and conservation authorities to meet their stated policy objectives, with most agencies having previously approved policy documents that emphasize the importance of outdoor recreation, trails and active transportation infrastructure. Many of these partners have or are actively planning reconciliations plans that could be directly linked to the Trail. As the Trail becomes more consistently recognized in policy documents, agencies will find a sense of pride in being a part of one of Canada's most iconic trails networks.

Policy language must also recognize the treaties and traditional territory the Trail lies within and support a Two-Eyed Seeing approach that will guide implementation of the Trail Strategy.

To support integration of the Trail into policy documents, draft policy language has been created using examples from communities along the Moraine where the Trail is already recognized within approved plans. The Model Policy Language is included in Appendix A and will need to be updated to integrate a Two-Eyed Seeing approach and other relevant content. Model policies should be easily modified for use by both upper and lower tier municipalities, First Nations or by Conservation Authorities.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Review and update the Model Policy Language and include supporting opportunities for reconciliation. Leverage connections with upper-tier, lower-tier, and single-tier municipal staff and councils to share the Model Policy Language and Preferred Trail Alignment Map for the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail and include those elements in Official Plans, Transportation Master Plans, Trails Plans and Recreation Plans. Similarly, engage First Nations rights holders to adopt Model Policy Language in relevant Community plans.
- b.** Work with Conservation Authorities to embed the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail into Trails Plans and Land Management Plans.
- c.** Share Oak Ridges Moraine Trail governance model and Preferred Trail Alignment with all municipalities, First Nations Rights holders and Conservation Authorities across the Moraine for inclusion in policy documents to ensure cohesive policy across the Moraine.
- d.** Encourage municipalities to demonstrate ownership over sections of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail within their jurisdiction to respond to their residents' needs for outdoor recreational amenities.

Action 2: Develop Land Acquisition and Easement Agreements with all Agencies to Support the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Development

Once the preferred trail alignment has been finalized, agreements will need to be developed among the various entities who have the legislative authority to grant access to the Trail, or to require space for the Trail to be set aside as an easement within new developments. As lands within the preferred alignment come up for sale or development, ORMT partners, including First Nations and land trusts (Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, Mno Aki Land Trust, Northumberland Land Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada and others) should be offered first right of refusal for those parcels to purchase, even if simply to sever land for the Trail and resell the parcel to the next landowner. These agreements will require ongoing communication between the various agencies to ensure that an opportunity to expand the Trail is not missed when a parcel changes hands, is declared surplus or comes onto the open market.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Standardize and implement agreements with ORMT partners (municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities) to ensure that lands within the Preferred Trail Alignment are identified to the Trail organization when and if they are proposed for sale or development.
- b.** Identify provincial or federally held lands near or within the preferred alignment and enter into negotiations to secure access on those lands for the Trail.



Action 3: Establish Consistent Maintenance Practices across the ORMT, Leveraging Trained Volunteers to Support Partners in Maintaining the Trail

A major challenge for trails that cross jurisdictional boundaries is the provision of a consistent, reliable standard of maintenance on the Trail. Municipalities, conservation authorities, land trusts and private landowners all have different levels of resources and expectations for maintenance, but for a user the experience is what truly matters.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail has a long history of attracting dedicated volunteers to the cause – people have built boardwalks, bridges and trails along the Moraine for more than 30 years. This Strategy presents an opportunity to formalize some of the enthusiasm from volunteers, aligning their desire to support the Trail with the needs of other agencies – especially those in the public sector – with regards to duty of care, liability and consistency of expectation.

By creating clear expectations and consistent agreements with all partner agencies across the Moraine, volunteers will be empowered to support municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities, land trusts and other landowners in maintaining the Trail to a consistent, high-quality standard.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Identify liability and insurance needs for all partners and acquire the necessary coverage to be able to support volunteer maintenance activities and other activities such as harvesting and gathering, along the entire length of the Trail.

- b.** Develop and certify Volunteer Training Programs to build ownership and maintenance capacity across the Moraine.

- c.** Formalize and regularly update maintenance agreements with all partners across the Trail to allow ORMT volunteers to support the ongoing maintenance of the Trail.

Action 4: Develop a Land Acquisition Strategy for the Trail

As the Trail continues to expand, there may be areas where the acquisition of property to secure an important link in the Trail for the long term becomes necessary. A Land Acquisition Strategy will help to ensure that decisions about access and acquisition are made in a manner that are sustainable and cost-effective for the long-term. The criteria for acquisition should be refined as the Strategy is developed, but the initial list of criteria based on what has been heard during the development of this strategy are:

- **In the Preferred alignment:** Does the acquisition provide connections through the preferred alignment?
- **Off-Road:** Does the acquisition move a segment of the Trail from an on-road to off-road condition?
- **Remarkable:** Does the acquisition provide connections to unique ecological, geological or cultural elements that demonstrate the Moraine's importance?
- **Ceremonial:** Does the land provide ceremonial access for First Nations Peoples?
- **Publicly Owned:** Is the land owned by a government entity or conservation authority? Is there an opportunity for a long-term access agreement and Indigenous cultural, gathering or harvesting practices?
- **Potential for Loss:** If the land is being sold or changing hands, are access agreements available, or is the loss of a potential connection likely if the land is not purchased by the Trail and its partners?
- **Impact on existing routes:** Would a new trail section require significant rerouting of existing routes, and are those changes worth the additional investment?

While land acquisition carries the highest cost when compared to access agreements or easements, it provides the highest degree of confidence that the high-quality trail experience will be developed and maintained in perpetuity, so it should remain an important aspect of this Strategy moving forward.

Specific Steps:

- a. Collaborate with local land trusts including Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, Mno Aki Land Trust, Northumberland Land Trust and Nature Conservancy of Canada to identify key areas to target for acquisition.
- b. Identify key lands or easements to guide acquisition in partnership with municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities and other partners.
- c. Involve developers adjacent to or near the Trail to create connections, emphasizing the benefits of trails to home values.

Action 5: Landowner Relations

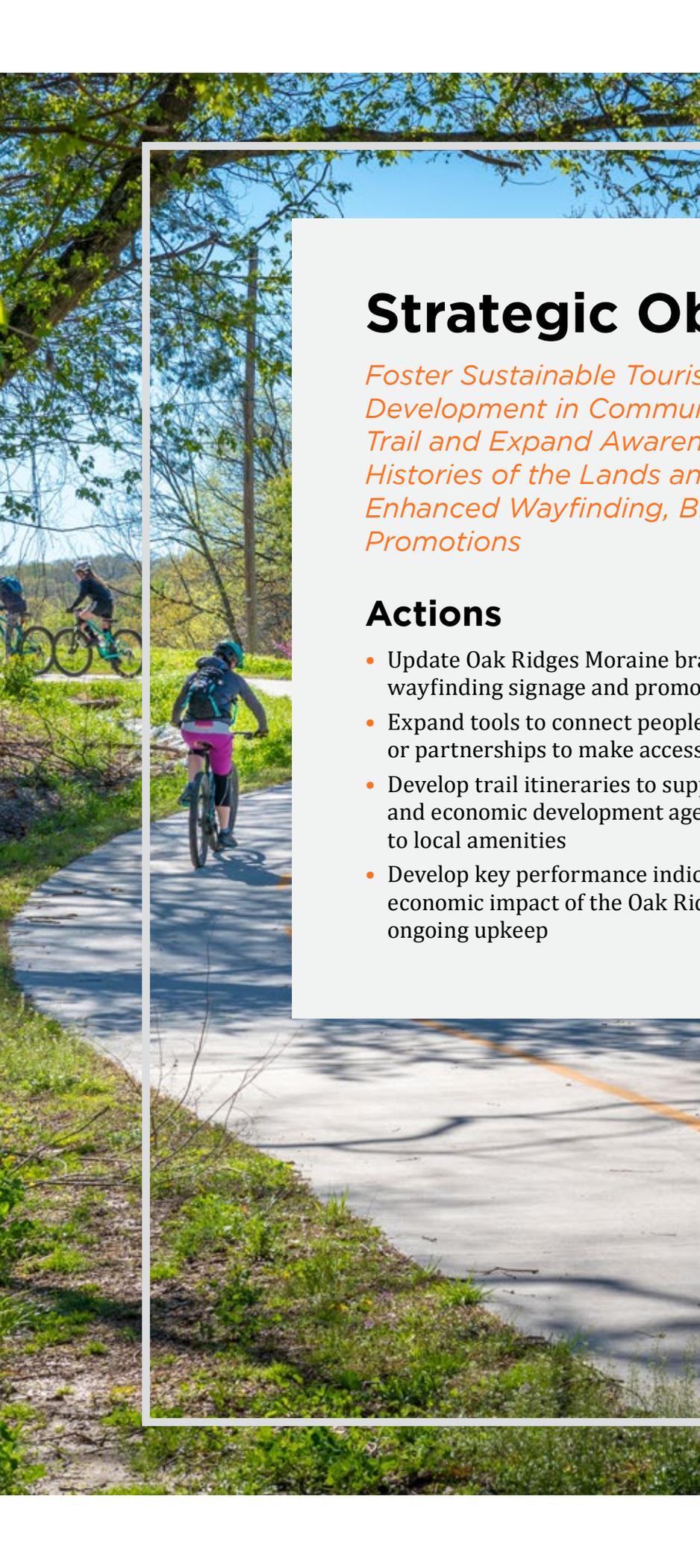
Trail networks and landowners go hand-in-hand, and traditionally have been partners and allies for many years. The success of trail use property agreements depends on the Trail's governing body to build and maintain positive landowner relations. These positive relationships will ideally result in landowners becoming and staying strong supporters of the ORMT activities in their communities. Relationships between land securement partners, landowners, and First Nations Communities and Indigenous organizations may be important to gain agreement for access activities that support reconciliation and Indigenous cultural, spiritual and traditional practices.

The governing body of the ORMT should dedicate significant resources and time in the negotiation process for new easements (landowner agreements) as the first vital step in developing positive landowner relations. Indigenous relations activities can support First Nations involvement and partnerships. Once agreements have been reached, volunteers and staff (once hired) should continue to be in contact with the landowner to ensure that the landowner continues to feel good about their conservation efforts and involvement in the Trail. Contact with landowners should be professional, consistent with policies and procedures, and undertaken in the spirit of partnership.

For early implementation of landowner relations efforts, a Landowner Director should be a volunteer member of the SIWG with experience in landowner relations. As the Strategy moves forward and additional resources become available, there is an opportunity to scale up the responsibilities associated with the Landowner Relations Director and develop that position into a paid staff position moving forward.

Specific Steps:

- a. Develop a Landowner Relations Committee mandate and membership policy including the committee's accountabilities and responsibilities, authority, and reporting structure. Specific indigenous relations activities should be supported.
- b. Within a Landowner Relations Manual, include a landowner relations program that outlines the strategic importance, who the landowners are and common landowner concerns. In developing a manual the concerns and interests of First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples will be considered. The Manual should also have guidance on themes such as response time, communication style and frequency of personal contact.
- c. Create a list and be clear on the Landowner Relations Director responsibilities that include the following:
 1. develop a landowner contact strategy;
 2. create a list of landowners to contact;
 3. prioritize the properties - develop a landowner contact list in accordance with the land acquisition criteria, with personal details (i.e. the landowner has expressed an interest in donating or selling the property) further influencing the prioritizations of contacts;
 4. determine trail access or land securement options;
 5. continue connections and appreciation for the landowners; and
 6. review other policies for consideration for things such as permissions for Indigenous ceremonial, gathering and harvesting practices, structures and liability and the landowner.



Strategic Objective #5

Foster Sustainable Tourism and Economic Development in Communities along the Trail and Expand Awareness of the Trail and Histories of the Lands and People through Enhanced Wayfinding, Branding and Promotions

Actions

- Update Oak Ridges Moraine branding to create quality wayfinding signage and promotional materials
- Expand tools to connect people to the Trail through transit or partnerships to make access to the Trail more equitable
- Develop trail itineraries to support local tourism operators and economic development agencies to connect trail users to local amenities
- Develop key performance indicators to measure the economic impact of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail to support ongoing upkeep

3.5 Strategic Objective #5

Foster Sustainable Tourism and Economic Development in Communities along the Trail and Expand Awareness of the Trail and Histories of the Land and People through Enhanced Wayfinding, Branding and Promotions

When completed in accordance with the Vision in this Strategy, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will be an iconic trail tourism destination, offering unique opportunities to connect with and learn about the Moraine for local residents, Indigenous Peoples, and visitors from around the globe. It will provide sustainable tourism and economic development opportunities in the communities that the Trail passes through while elevating the profile of the Moraine in the minds of users. The Trail will attract a wide variety of users, from avid hikers seeking to complete a challenging end-to-end journey to families seeking to connect with nature for a day, and access to ceremonial or harvesting lands for First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples. An iconic trail deserves an iconic visual identity, so the Trail should focus on developing a branding and wayfinding strategy that clearly communicates the value that the Moraine brings to Ontario, the Trail's importance in protecting that value and telling the story and history of the original peoples.

Trails generate significant economic, health, and environmental benefits. Research from across Canada has shown that trail user spending has positive direct and indirect impacts on local economies, and that property values near trails increase. Trails provide people with a safe space to exercise or feel a spiritual connection improving physical and mental health and reducing overall healthcare costs, and trails support storm water retention, flood control, carbon reduction, reduction of air and water pollution, and preservation of natural habitats, contributing to the health and resilience of our communities. As this Strategy is implemented, the extension of those benefits to all communities along and adjacent to the Trail should be a priority, expanding access to the positive impacts that the Trail can have on both individual and community well-being.

Action 1: Update Oak Ridges Moraine Branding to Create Quality Wayfinding Signage and Promotional Materials

Consistent and quality branding is a key component to making the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail more recognizable for all users.

An immediately identifiable trail ‘brand’ is a key component in improving recognition of the Trail and legibility for those using it. Branding materials involve developing a renewed logo for the Trail, the creation of a dedicated web page, custom itineraries, and updated wayfinding signage that can be used to promote the Trail and can be applied throughout the system.

Wayfinding signage does more than just make the Trail more visible – it also reminds users of the amenities, communities and other trails that the ORMT connects with. Wayfinding is also an avenue to communicate the values of the Trail, reminding users of the Moraine’s importance, connecting users to the land and asserting the Trail’s role in reconciliation efforts with First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples. As new branding and wayfinding materials for the Trail are developed, close collaboration with the SIWG and relevant committees or partners will be necessary to ensure that the materials created accurately reflect the local histories and the significance of the Moraine to the relevant First Nations Communities.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Collaborate with First Nations and Indigenous organizations on the development of the Wayfinding Strategy and Branding Strategy.

- b.** Update branding for the Trail including the development of a new logo, web page and itineraries promoting the Trail and the communities it serves.

- b.** Develop a Wayfinding Strategy to facilitate an update to wayfinding signage across the entire system, creating consistent and recognizable branding from end-to-end.

- b.** Develop a Marketing Strategy for the Trail to increase awareness of its existence, its routes, and how to get involved in maintenance and upkeep of the system.

Action 2: Expand Tools to Connect People to the Trail through Transit or Partnerships to Make Access to the Trail More Equitable

Since the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will be a community asset it will need to be accessible for all members of the community to use. Creative programs and partnerships with transit agencies, youth groups, conservation authorities and other agencies can help to connect people to the Trail, expanding its accessibility to everyone, not just those with access to a private automobile.

Specific Steps:

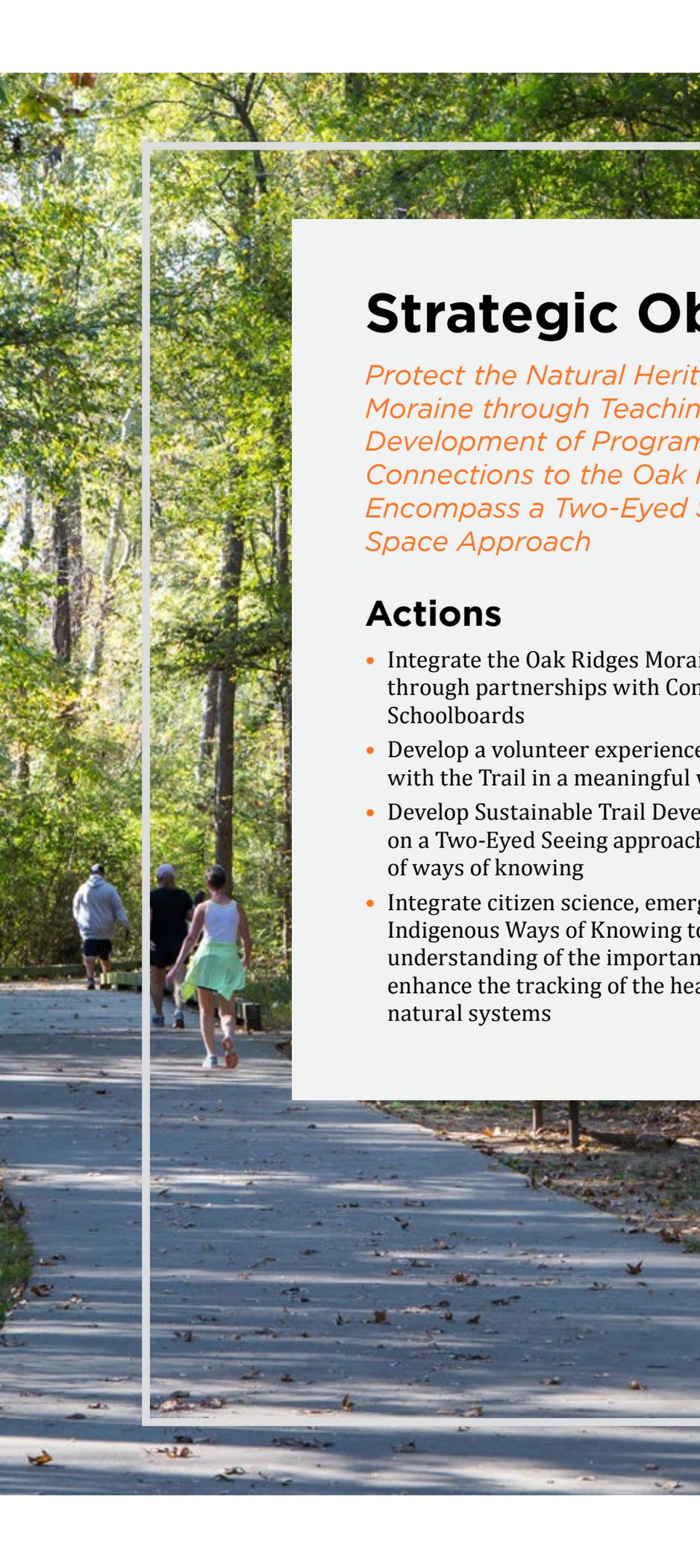
- a.** Develop specialized region-specific itineraries that promote local businesses and economic activity.
- b.** Annually update, revise, and introduce new itineraries to maintain accuracy and quality.

Action 3: Develop Key Performance Indicators to Measure the Economic Impact of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail to Support Upkeep

Trails have impacts that are not always quantifiable using traditional measurement techniques. Trails can bring both direct and indirect benefits to communities in the form of economic uplift, community cohesion, health, property values and more – but without deliberate methodology to analyze those impacts it is hard to confidently state the benefits of the Trail. As the Trail moves forward, there are opportunities to identify the ways that the ORMT is benefiting the surrounding communities to make a stronger case for continued investment in the Trail using analysis developed by other trails studies. Appendix C highlights four case studies with detailed information on the trail network, location, length, and trail impact, which can provide information about the types of KPIs that can be tracked and linked directly to the Trail.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Explore ways to collect demographic information on trail users, including where people are coming from (local vs. non-local), and tracking number of users over time.
- b.** Develop a Visitor Experience Score to evaluate the quality of experience of users.
- c.** Develop a means to track economic benefits for the surrounding communities and local businesses that the Trail provides (i.e., Trail Impact Study every 5 years).



Strategic Objective #6

Protect the Natural Heritage System of the Moraine through Teaching, Outreach and the Development of Programs that Build Personal Connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and Encompass a Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space Approach

Actions

- Integrate the Oak Ridges Moraine into school curriculums through partnerships with Conservation Authorities and Schoolboards
- Develop a volunteer experience guide to connect volunteers with the Trail in a meaningful way
- Develop Sustainable Trail Development Guidelines based on a Two-Eyed Seeing approach and Indigenous histories of ways of knowing
- Integrate citizen science, emerging technologies and Indigenous Ways of Knowing to deepen Trail users' understanding of the importance of the Moraine and enhance the tracking of the health of the Moraine's natural systems

3.6 Strategic Objective #6

Protect the Natural Heritage System of the Moraine Through Teaching, Outreach and the Development of Programs that Build Personal Connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine and Encompass Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space approaches

Programs that educate Trail users about the natural heritage systems of the Oak Ridges Moraine and build personal connections to the Moraine are crucial for promoting the stewardship and protection of this important natural area. School-based programs, partnerships with conservation authorities and First Nations, guided walks and hikes, community-based science activities and the use of emerging technologies like augmented reality provide numerous opportunities for people of all ages to connect with the Trail in a meaningful way.

These programs can help to raise awareness of the unique features and wildlife of the Moraine, as well as the importance of protecting this valuable resource. By building personal connections to the Moraine, these programs can also help to create a sense of ownership and responsibility among users and members of the public, which can lead to increased support for conservation efforts. In short, education and outreach programs can help to engage the next generation of conservationists, trail builders and supporters for the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail.



Action 1: Integrate the Oak Ridges Moraine into School Curriculums through Partnerships with First Nations, Conservation Authorities and Schoolboards

Many conservation authorities already have relationships with their local school boards to educate students about the ecological significance of the areas where they operate. The Trail organization should focus on partnering with conservation authorities, First Nations and others to integrate information about the Moraine and First Nations histories into those curriculum elements, including with hands-on opportunities for students to visit the Trail and learn about the Moraine and Reconciliation. By building upon these partnerships, the Oak Ridges Moraine can be embedded in school curriculums to educate youth in both classroom and in-person educational settings, building a new generation of residents who are connected to the Moraine in a more personal way, raising awareness of the unique features and wildlife of the Moraine, as well as the importance of protecting this valuable resource.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Integrate the Oak Ridges Moraine into school curriculums through partnerships with conservation authorities, First Nations and school boards to offer field and classroom programming.

Action 2: Develop a Volunteer Experience Guide to Connect Volunteers with the Trail in a Meaningful Way

A positive volunteer experience brings people to the Trail in a meaningful way, creating new avenues for people to support the Trail's long-term vision. Engaged volunteers are more likely to be long-term donors, to promote the Trail and to speak in support of the Trail when decisions are being made. Energizing and engaging new volunteer audiences is also vital for the long-term sustainability of the Trail. With youth, it creates a new generation of trail advocates, leaders, and volunteer organizers and can support opportunities for young Indigenous Guardians and urban Indigenous Peoples to uphold responsibilities to protect and preserve the land for future generations. To provide an optimal experience it is important to meaningfully differentiate between volunteer audiences and provide the types of volunteer experiences that meet their needs and expectations. Youth, retired people, company / corporate groups, and others should all be considered and have volunteer opportunities crafted in consultation with members of those audiences.

The Trail organization should provide a hub to expand the resources available to volunteer organizations to ensure that their efforts and outreach can be more impactful by identifying priority volunteer projects, connecting potential and diverse volunteers to those projects, coordinating logistics and providing follow-up activities to provide a positive experience.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Identify volunteer 'audiences' – students, seniors, service clubs, First Nation communities and other Indigenous Peoples, and others, and identify experience preferences.
- b.** Expand resources available to coordinate volunteer activities.

Action 3: Develop Sustainable Trail Development Guidelines

Partner with Conservation Authorities and First Nations to develop a set of guidelines to guide the development of the Trail in an environmentally sustainable way. Conduct a wise practice review to understand global leadership and local Indigenous ways of knowing that supports sustainable development when building a trail and how to integrate a Two-Eyed Seeing approach. By modeling the Trail Development Guidelines off wise practices and in conjunction with local experts and knowledge keepers, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail will be a leading example of sustainable trail development.

Specific Steps:

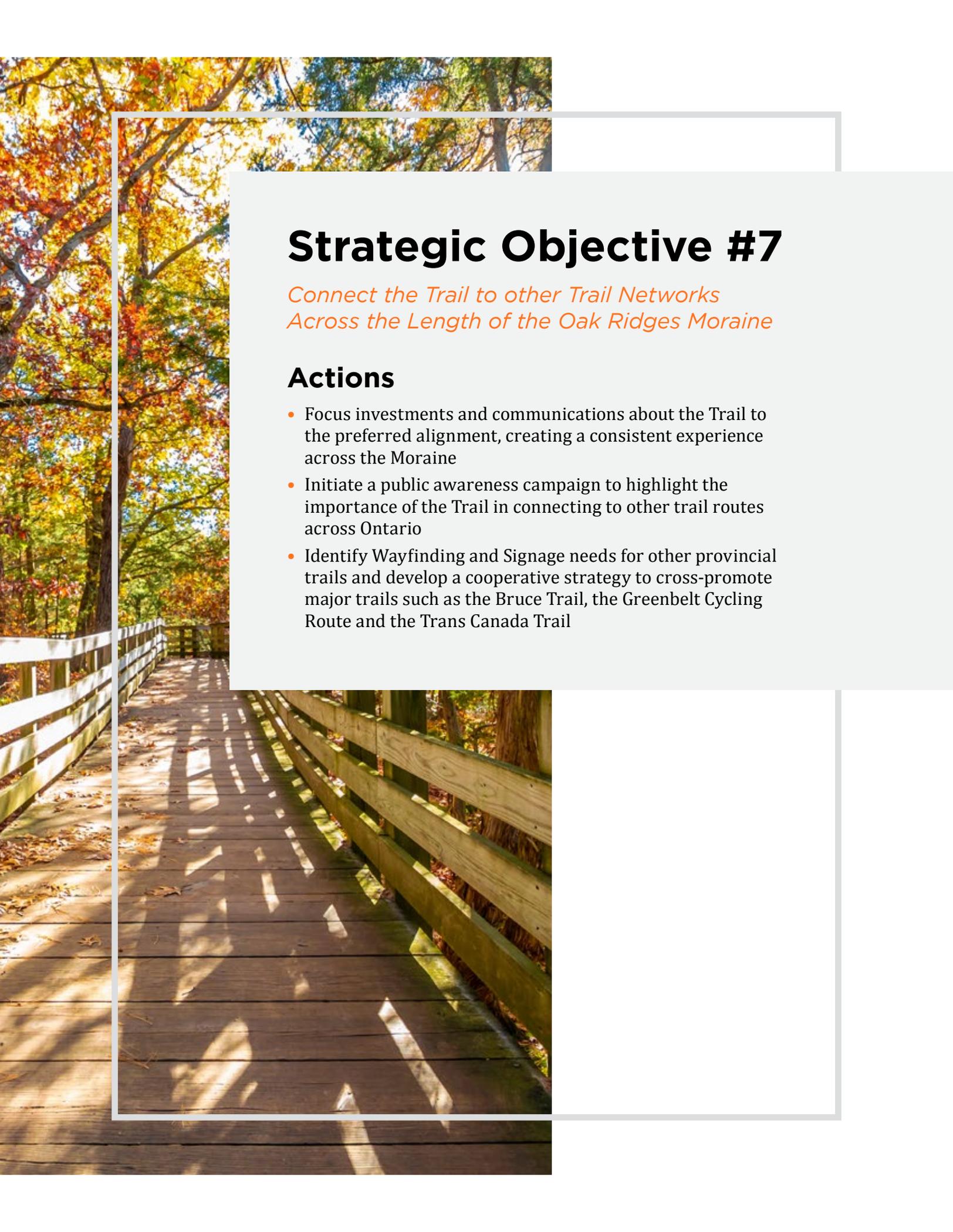
- a.** Collaborate with Conservation Authorities and First Nations to identify Trail Development Guidelines for environmentally sensitive and culturally important areas.
- b.** Conduct a wise practice review of sustainable Trail Development Guidelines to ensure that the ORMT meets the needs of all partners and Peoples.

Action 4: Integrate Citizen Science and Emerging Technologies to Deepen Trail Users' Understanding of the Importance of the Moraine and Enhance the Tracking of the Health of the Moraine's Natural Systems

The proliferation of handheld mobile devices and access to the internet can be used as a positive educational resource for those using the Moraine. Developing applications and using technology can enhance access to educational resources for Trail users and support reconciliation. For example, birdsong applications for mobile phones have become increasingly popular, allowing people to use their phones to listen and identify what birds are in their area based off of the birdcalls being made around them. Promoting resources similar to these applications will democratize educational opportunities across the Moraine and will allow users to choose how they want to connect with the landscape.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Conduct a review of existing applications that can enhance user experiences in natural areas.
- b.** Integrate Citizen Science/application and technology activities into the ongoing monitoring of the health of the Moraine.



Strategic Objective #7

*Connect the Trail to other Trail Networks
Across the Length of the Oak Ridges Moraine*

Actions

- Focus investments and communications about the Trail to the preferred alignment, creating a consistent experience across the Moraine
- Initiate a public awareness campaign to highlight the importance of the Trail in connecting to other trail routes across Ontario
- Identify Wayfinding and Signage needs for other provincial trails and develop a cooperative strategy to cross-promote major trails such as the Bruce Trail, the Greenbelt Cycling Route and the Trans Canada Trail

3.7 Strategic Objective #7

Connect the Trail to other Trail Networks Across the Length of the Oak Ridges Moraine

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is uniquely located within a short drive of Canada's most heavily populated area, providing a high-quality natural experience to residents of a rapidly urbanizing region and creating opportunities for reconciliation. The Trail also presents an opportunity to connect with some of Canada's most recognizable trails – the Bruce Trail and the Trans Canada Trail, in addition to connecting with trails developed by local and regional municipalities as well as conservation authorities.

These connections create many avenues for cross-promotion, through the development of shared signage and wayfinding to the creation of tourism itineraries that take users onto other routes to form loops or connections to key destinations. As the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is expanded, it can serve as the east-west running 'spine' of a well-established network of trails across southern Ontario, further solidifying Ontario's reputation as an outdoor experience leader worldwide and highlighting the treaties and histories of local First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples.



Action 1: Focus Investments and Communications about the Trail to the Preferred Trail Alignment, Creating a Consistent Experience Across the Moraine

It should be clear to all partners that when discussing the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, you are talking about the central corridor of the Trail that runs (or will run) along the preferred alignment. This singular end-to-end Trail should form the basis for communications and investment to create a consistent experience across the Moraine. Loop routes, side trails and other connections should still be identified and mapped, but it should be understood that the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is one route, connected across the entire Moraine.

Specific Steps:

- a.** Identify local, regional and conservation authority trails that connect to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail spine. Integrate those routes into future mapping using side trail or loop route nomenclature.

- b.** Regularly update mapping based on new connecting trails.

Action 2: Initiate a Public Awareness Campaign to Highlight the Importance of the Trail in Connecting to other Trail Routes Across Ontario

When completed, the ORMT will improve the experience of trail users across Ontario. Whether they are travelling on a local trail and want to connect to a conservation authority trail nearby or are looking to traverse the Bruce Trail and the Trans Canada Trail during a long-term hiking excursion, the ORMT will make those connections easier, more comfortable and more consistent. There is significant value in promoting the Trail as an important connector, linking the wide variety of trails (many of which run north-south) into a broader trail network.

Specific Steps:

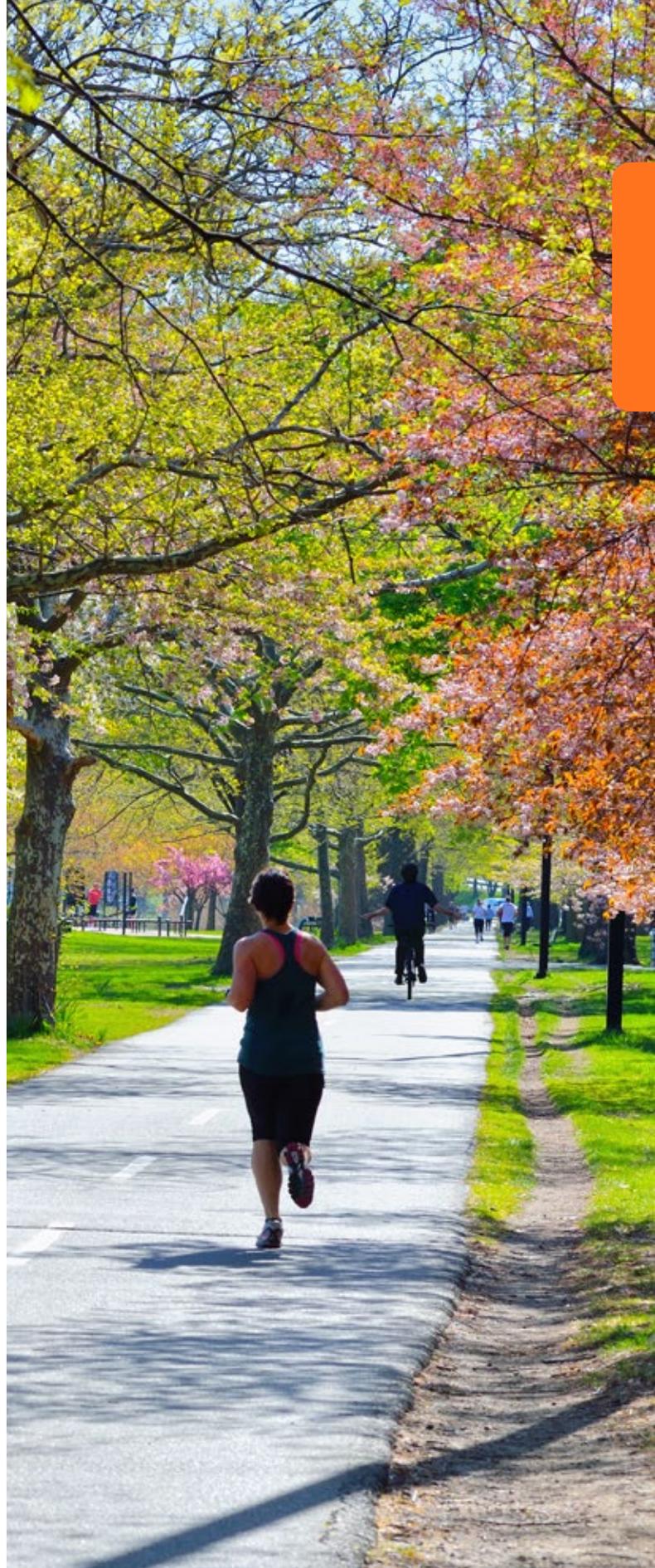
- a.** Develop loop route itineraries to highlight where local trails form part of a wider Oak Ridges Moraine Trail network.

Action 3: Identify Wayfinding and Signage Needs for other Provincial Trails and Develop a Cooperative Strategy to Cross-Promote Major Trails such as the Bruce Trail, the Greenbelt Cycling Route and the Trans Canada Trail

Every wayfinding sign, trailhead sign and destination marker along the connecting trails in the Oak Ridges Moraine present an opportunity to raise awareness about the ORMT, its role in establishing Ontario as a Trails leader worldwide, and reconciliation. The connections to the iconic trails systems that the Trail links should be highlighted, and partnerships between the Trans Canada Trail, the Bruce Trail and the ORMT should be strengthened to raise awareness of the role that all three trails play in developing healthier, more prosperous communities.

Specific Steps:

- a. Develop wayfinding strategies that show connections to major trails in partnership with other trail agencies and First Nations.
- a. Initiate a shared marketing campaign to promote the ORMT, the Bruce Trail and the Trans Canada Trail to destination tourists looking for a unique hiking experience.





Chapter 4

Moving Forward

- 4.1 A Plan of Action
- 4.2 Priorities to Move the Route Forward

4.1 A Plan of Action

Based on the Draft Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Strategy, it is recommended that the ORMF **pursue funding to hire a Project Manager and Indigenous liaison capacity to manage implementation and Indigenous relations for the ORMT** for an initial two-year time period. The Project Manager will be responsible for overseeing some of the critical elements of the ORMT Strategy, including the route forward.

The Route Forward outlines several fundamental factors that are vital to achieving the Strategy’s vision, supporting the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail in becoming a world-class tourism and ecological asset.

The Route Forward

Strategy Leadership

Organizing a Strategy Implementation Working Group (SIWG) with representatives from First Nations Rights holders and key stakeholder groups mentioned in section 3.1, becoming champions of the Trail, will influence the ability to implement the strategic objectives.



- Organize SIWG meetings to determine a final governance model for the Trail.
- Initiate the necessary steps to establish the ORMT’s governing body.
 - This could include supporting existing agencies in consolidating and/or transferring responsibilities, engaging local First Nations and other Indigenous perspectives, creating new committees and recruiting membership, establishing financial accountabilities and other tasks as required to support the ongoing governance of the Trail.

Strategic Partnerships

The ORMT Strategy encourages partnerships that foster meaningful participation to create collaboration that leads to accelerated accomplishments. Collaborative work enhances community awareness of the ORMT and facilitates resource and knowledge sharing.



Developing strategic partnerships with all levels of government and agencies, such as Provincial Government, Local and Regional Municipalities, Conservation Authorities, and First Nations Rights holders, to:

- Integrate supportive Policy Language into relevant planning and policy documents.
- Identify and refine the preferred route alignment.
- Standardize maintenance and access agreements across the Trail.
- Develop a Volunteer Training Program and Indigenous Engagement Program that meets the needs of key partners to support the ongoing maintenance of the Trail.
- Ensure the insurance and liability requirements for all partners are understood, and that the ORMT has the policies and coverage necessary to perform harvesting, gathering and ceremonial activities alongside maintenance activities to support the Trail across the geography of the Moraine.
- Pursue funding for development of trail connections within each jurisdiction.

Reconciliation

The Trail can provide a platform to showcase the distinct culture, traditions, and history of local First Nations Communities. The Trail can be used to not only honour the past but envision a shared path towards reconciliation.



- Support representation of First Nations Rights holders and Indigenous Peoples on trail governance structures including the SIWG and ongoing dialogue and engagement in ORMT activities.

Marketing and Branding

Branding and Marketing strategies can enhance the profile of the ORMT and expedite the realization of the vision.



- Initiate a branding exercise to reposition the organization and create a fresh visual identity for the Trail. Centre First Nation history, presence, culture and stories in the strategies.

Strategy Stewardship

The Trail's current entities, ORTA, ORM Land Trust, ORM Foundation and Greenbelt Foundation are stewards of the Trail with a rich history and dedicated investment to see its success long-term.



Trail Stewards, supported by a Project Manager and Indigenous relations capacity, have the experience, relationships, and capacity that can be harnessed to present the Strategy to all relevant decision-making bodies including:

- Municipal Councils,
- First Nations Rights holders,
- Conservation Authority Boards, and
- Provincial agencies.

4.2 Priorities to Move the Route Forward

The ORMT Strategy is a long-term guiding document that will shape how the Trail is built, used, and valued for generations to come. The implementation of the Strategy is divided into 2 Phases.

PHASE 1 Expanding Capacity YEAR 1-2

During this Phase, the foundations of governance, staffing and policy support for the Trail will be laid. The hiring of a Program Manager and additional capacity as needed, will support the definition of roles and responsibilities for implementing the recommendations contained in this Strategy and Indigenous relations while also refining the path forward as the Strategy moves into Phase 2.



Establish

Convene the Strategy Implementation Working Group to develop a governance model for the Trail. Refine and confirm roles and responsibilities for all relevant partners.



Engage

Further engage local First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples and community members in implementation of the Trail Strategy.



Deliver

Deliver presentations to all Municipal Councils, Regional Councils, First Nation Communities, Conservation Authority Boards to introduce the Strategy and propose the inclusion of policy-supportive language for the ORMT into planning documents.



Finalize

Finalize the preferred alignment for the Trail and identify land acquisition priorities.

Finalize the new branding and wayfinding strategy for the Trail.

PHASE 2

Expanding the Trail and Community

YEARS 2+

The focus of Phase 2 is on building new connections – both physical and social – to the Trail. Through the partnerships developed during Phase 1, the Trail will grow and improve across the Moraine, creating new opportunities for people to explore the Moraine.

During this phase, the focus is also on expanding the volunteer base to support the Trail by increasing engagement with diverse communities across the Moraine and beyond including the First Nations Rights holders and the Indigenous Peoples that call the Moraine home. With the goal of expanding the demographics of trail users and volunteers to bring a more diverse set of perspectives to how the Trail can serve Ontario's diverse communities, new communications tools, volunteer activities and outreach efforts will be deployed.



Develop

Develop interim access agreements to the Trail on conservation authority lands for ORMT volunteers and members. Also, consider access for members without requiring additional fees (parking, access fees etc.) and free access for First Nations Right holders and other Indigenous Peoples.



Identify

Identify insurance and liability requirements for all parties to accommodate volunteer maintenance activities by ORMT Volunteers, as well as harvesting, gathering and sacred and ceremonial activities for First Nations Rights holders and Indigenous Peoples. Seek quotes for insurance to be compliant with those requirements and initiate work on needed resources including a Risk identification process.



Ensure

Ensure the integration of supportive policy language into all relevant planning documents across the Moraine.



Train

Develop a Volunteer Training, First Nations and Indigenous Engagement and/or other Guides to ensure that maintenance, and harvesting, gathering and ceremonial activities performed along the Trail can be done by trusted, trained, and insured people across the entire geography of the Moraine.



Create

Develop a Landowner Relations Strategy to support ongoing access, reconciliation, and acquisition efforts for the Trail.



Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 A Call to Action

5.1 A Call to Action

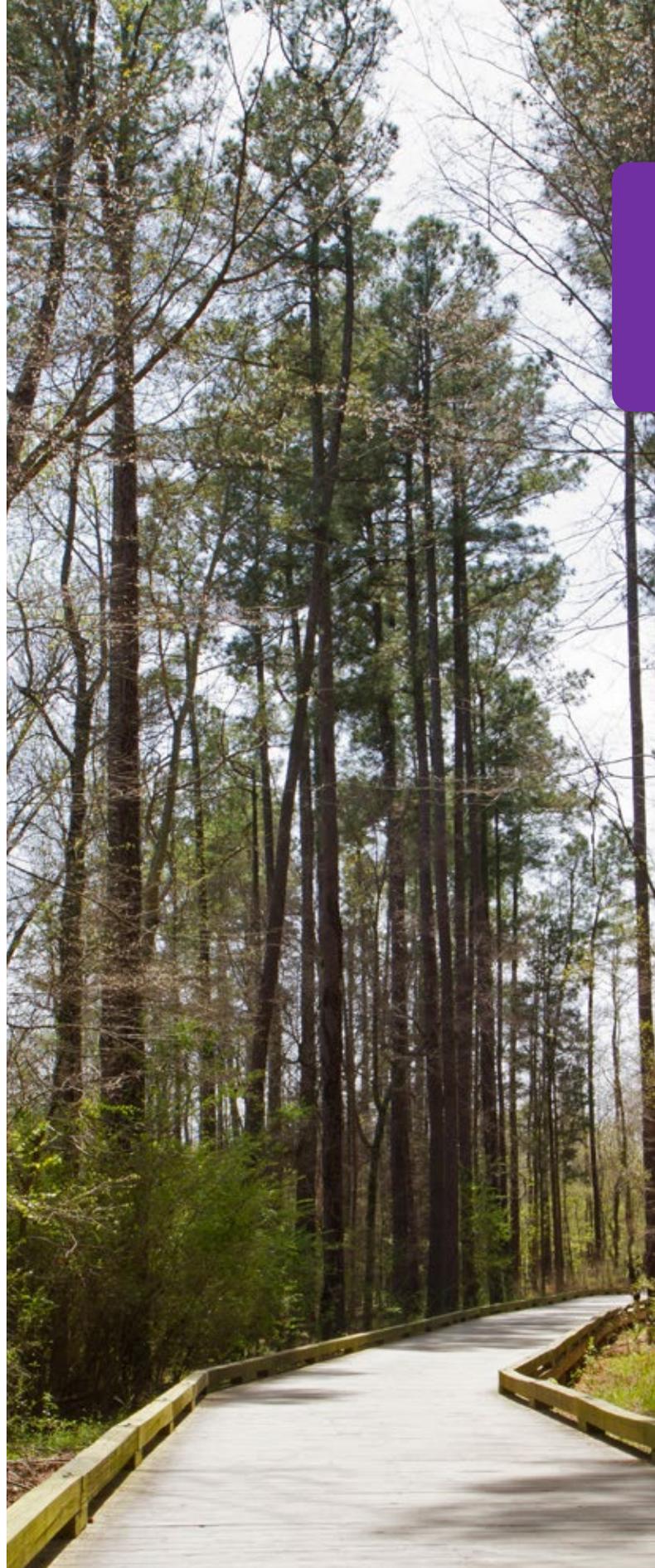
A completed ORMT that provides a consistent, high-quality trail experience from end-to-end would situate it as one of North America's most iconic trails – a feat made even more impressive when considering that the Trail also lies within a short drive from one of the continent's largest and fastest growing metropolitan areas. The Trail presents opportunities to improve the quality of life for Ontario residents, to drive economic development, to contribute to climate resilience and to advance reconciliation – but only if the Trail provides the exceptional visitor experience that is outlined in this Strategy. A disconnected, inconsistent trail may still bring some localized benefits, but a complete, connected trail is an example of the whole being much greater than the sum of its parts.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail has undergone periods of significant expansion. The recent history of the Trail, however, has shown that without coordination, cooperation, and a deliberate strategy for improvement, it will become increasingly difficult to achieve the vision of a Moraine-wide trail that is accessible to all as outlined in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. Today, nearly 50% of the Trail's 268km exists as an off-road trail that provides the type of experience that is desired in this Strategy. Over time, it is the goal of this Strategy to complete the remaining 50% to provide a remarkable experience for visitors as they connect to all that the Moraine has to offer.

A complete, connected Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to expand access to nature and green space, preserve natural landscapes, improve community health and well-being, support tourism industries and create new opportunities to build new relationships with First Nation Communities and other Indigenous Peoples in Ontario. But as the landscape of the Oak Ridges Moraine faces new pressures for development, a concerted, multi-party effort is required to ensure that vital connections are not lost. Without a coordinated approach to securing access to lands for the Trail, there is a risk that trail connections will be lost due to development or land ownership changes. Each new gap in the Trail will become increasingly difficult to close, making it unlikely that the ORMT will provide a consistent, world-class trail experience across the entire Oak Ridges Moraine.

Recognizing that the value of the Trail will only be fully realized when it is complete, connected, and consistent, this Strategy outlines a long-term vision for a collaborative process to improve the Trail across the Moraine. All levels of government, First Nations, conservation authorities, landowners, land trusts and other conservancies will have important roles to play in improving the Trail – all done with the knowledge that what benefits the Trail in one area will have benefits that stretch along the entire trail corridor.

This Strategy charts a path towards a future where the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail lives up to its potential – connecting residents and visitors alike to the natural and cultural heritage of the Moraine and deepening their connection to this vital landform. It is based on a thorough understanding of the history of the Trail, the capacities of the agencies who support it and the wise practices that can guide the implementation of a multi-party Strategy such as this. The actions identified herein will move towards a future where the Trail is complete and connected, where it is used as a tool for teaching and for Reconciliation, where it supports local businesses and where it enhances individual and community well-being. These actions will take time, and they will take resources – but the benefits of acting now to create a trail that is connected across the geography of the Moraine far outweigh the risks associated with losing the opportunity to create a trail that will provide value for generations to come.





VISION

**Explore the lands
where the Rivers Begin**



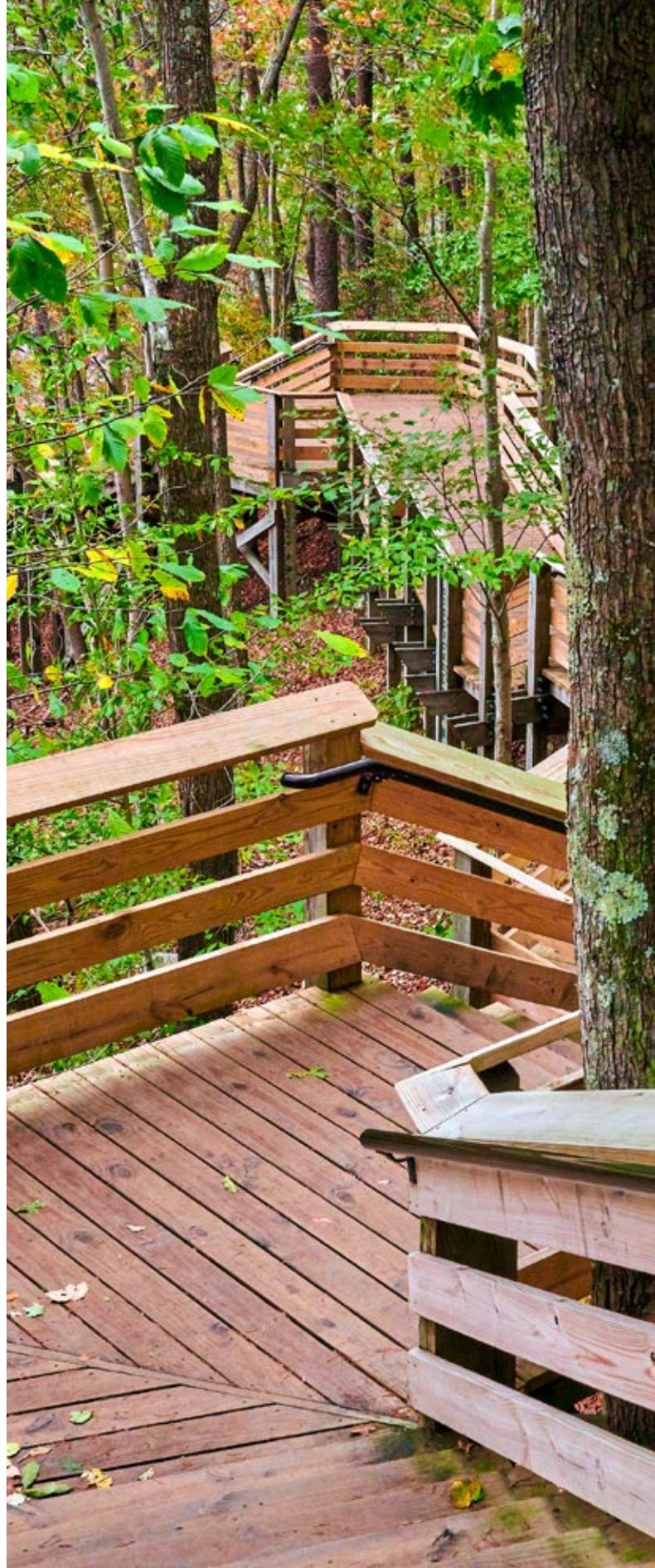
OUR MISSION

The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is a permanently protected nature trail corridor connecting people to the water, the lands, the history and the communities of the Oak Ridges Moraine.



To achieve this Vision and Mission, efforts are required across seven Strategic Objectives, which will guide the implementation of this Strategy now and into the future. While the specific Actions within each Strategic Objective may shift as needs warrant, the Strategic Objectives will remain to guide the future of the ORMT across its lifespan.

1. Strengthen alignment, leadership, and collaboration of partners along the Oak Ridges Moraine.
2. Create opportunities for meaningful relationship building with First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples, in the spirit of truth and reconciliation.
3. Invest in the Trail to create connections through green space that provide a consistent, accessible experience to safely connect users to the Moraine's natural and cultural assets.
4. Secure and maintain access to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail through partnerships with the Province of Ontario, conservation authorities, municipalities, First Nations Rights holders, landowners, and other agencies/ trail organizations.
5. Foster sustainable tourism and economic development in the communities along the Trail and expand awareness of the Trail through enhanced wayfinding, branding, partnerships, and promotions.
6. Protect the natural heritage system through teaching, outreach and the development of programs that build personal connections to the Oak Ridges Moraine.
7. Connect the Trail to other trails networks across the length of the Oak Ridges Moraine.



Support for the ORMT means achieving a long-standing policy goal of expanding access to nature across some of Ontario's most unique and important landscapes. The completion of the Trail will:

- Expand access to greenspace for millions of Ontarians
- Connect users to the significance of the Oak Ridges Moraine
- Conserve natural areas for future generations
- Enhance quality of life and well-being in communities
- Support local economies through tourism
- Increase local property values
- Provide educational opportunities for people of all ages
- Create avenues for reconciliation with local First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples and organizations through sharing of history, values and traditional knowledge
- Engage residents through volunteer opportunities, supporting community cohesion and leadership development
- Improve access to healthy lifestyles through physical activity
- Support policy goals at the provincial, regional and local levels across the Moraine

With these benefits in mind, this Strategy exists to create a trail that will remain as a permanent testament to the dedication of the volunteers, landowners, supporters and partners who have brought the Trail to this point, and who will be called upon to do more as the Trail moves towards completion. This Strategy will create opportunities for reconnection to the land for First Nations rightsholders and urban Indigenous Peoples, as well as opportunities for upholding and partaking in rights.

The task that lies ahead – to complete the ORMT – is no small one. It will take time, resources and many partners, but the ambition of the vision is matched by the dedication and determination of those who have contributed to this Strategy. The future of the Trail is bright – so let's walk this path together.

