Sturgeon Valley Trails Plan
What We Heard Summary

Project

As a response to what was heard while creating the *Sturgeon Valley Areas Structure Plan*, **sturgeoncounty.ca/OurValley**, Sturgeon County also looked at the Valley's trail system. The intent of this project was to identify opportunities for better trail connection, especially to key destinations.

Decisions

To develop a Sturgeon Valley Trails Plan, the County worked with trail users to prioritize:

- Leading principles for planning the trail system
- Key destinations for trail users
- Existing or aspirational connections to serve users

SUMMER 2021

PHASE 1:
Background review and existing conditions

SEPTEMBER 2021

PHASE 2:
Connectivity Assessment & Public Engagement

FALL/WINTER 2021

PHASE 3:
A Path Forward

2022 AND BEYOND

PHASE 4:
Implementation

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Public Engagement – What We Did

County staff engaged directly with trail users to understand their aspirations and barriers.

3 Pop-up engagements throughout the Sturgeon Valley
- Three staff interviewed trail users on one afternoon, evening, and weekend the week of September 5, 2021
- Thirty-six trail users were interviewed

Online Survey
- Twenty-five signs with QR Codes to the survey were placed on trails or next to mailboxes
- One social media post was made on County Instagram and Facebook pages to encourage people to meet with staff on the trails or fill out the survey
- One hundred eighty-six survey responses were collected between September 8 - 19, 2021

What We Asked

In both the surveys and one-on-one conversations, the County had four prompts:

1. The principles most important when thinking of trails in Sturgeon Valley (pick three)
   a. All-season access
   b. Accessible for people with different mobility needs
   c. Safe and convenient for kids and older adults
   d. Physically separated from traffic
   e. Recreation-focused trails (meandering, scenic)
   f. Functional trails (more direct access to destinations)
   g. Available when it is dark outside (e.g. lighting)
   h. Nearby access to pathways from my home
   i. Parking available near trail heads
   j. Other

2. What are the most important destinations? (Asked using both a shortlist and a map)

3. Please describe (or draw) the routes where you would like to walk or bike

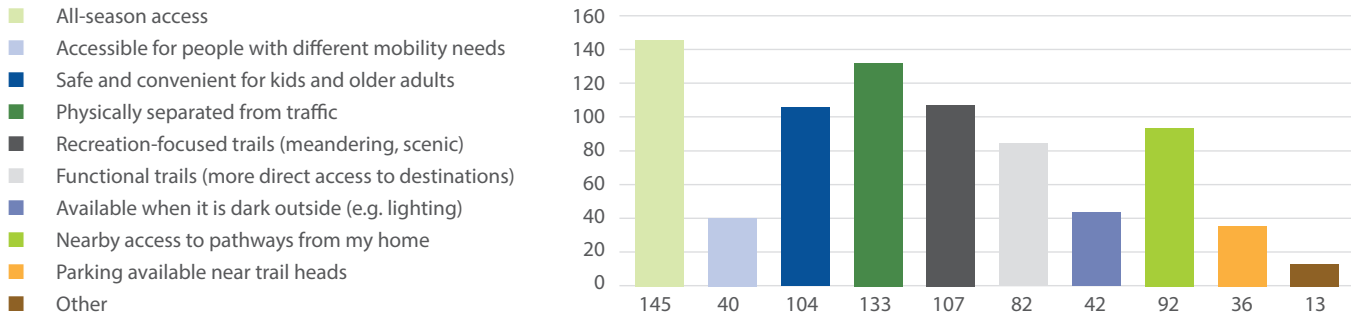4. What barriers do you face to get to the places you want to go?

What Else We Heard

While the scope of the engagement and the Sturgeon Valley Trails Plan was limited to connections in the Sturgeon Valley, residents did provide some additional feedback for connections outside of the Sturgeon Valley. That information was recorded and will be considered for future projects.

Leading Principles for the Trails Plan

The project team has used the conversations and open-ended comments which resulted in four leading guiding principles for the Sturgeon Valley Trails Plan:

- **All-season access to trails**
- **Recreation focused trails that are meandering, scenic**

- **Physically separated from traffic**
- **Safe and convenient for kids and older adults**

- ▪ All-season access
- ▪ Accessible for people with different mobility needs
- ▪ Safe and convenient for kids and older adults
- ▪ Physically separated from traffic
- ▪ Recreation-focused trails (meandering, scenic)
- ▪ Functional trails (more direct access to destinations)
- ▪ Available when it is dark outside (e.g. lighting)
- ▪ Nearby access to pathways from my home
- ▪ Parking available near trail heads
- ▪ Other

Chart values: 145, 40, 104, 133, 107, 82, 42, 92, 36, 13

While the other themes will be considered, the four themes above will be central to planning future connections and trail enhancements.

Key Destinations

The engagement results showed that over 50 per cent of respondents thought the City of St. Albert and recreation opportunities such as the Bellerose River Walk and the Sturgeon Valley Golf and Country Club were important or very important destinations.

This finding is largely in line with comments made during other engagement opportunities as part of previous projects such as Wellness on Wheels and feedback from the Area Structure Plan for Sturgeon County, where a connection to the City of St. Albert was often requested.

Some less frequent themes indicated an interest in connecting to Cardiff and Morinville, outside the study area. Others also indicated that they do not necessarily have a specific destination in mind, but rather want to access walking or biking loops.

Key Connections

This map illustrates the user feedback on trail importance. It shows the routes mentioned most frequently as highlighted in dark red, while paths mentioned fewer times are shown in orange and yellow.

Barriers

Participants were asked about barriers to walking or cycling they currently experience. By far, the most common responses related to a lack of safety and comfort. The most important barriers were having to walk on the road without separation from traffic and generally feeling unsafe. The absence of trails or sidewalks was another notable and related barrier.

This input is well represented in the principles.

Desired Routes from Pop-Up Engagement Sept 8, 9 and 11, 2021
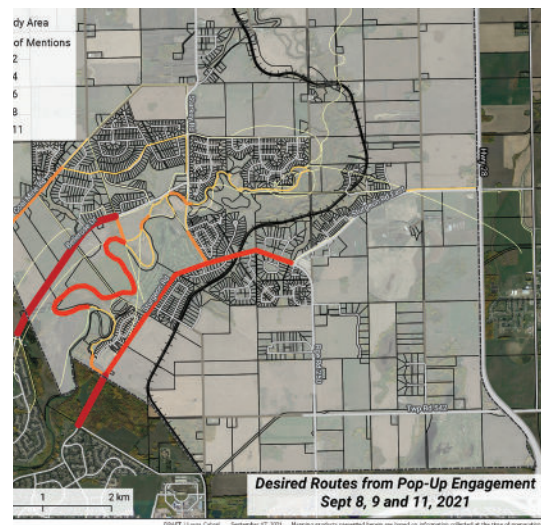
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Next Steps

The County technical team will use this input to develop a recommended Sturgeon Valley Trails Plan. Public Input will be used in combination with a technical analysis, a review of best practices, current County bylaws, as well as Provincial regulations.

The Sturgeon Valley Trails Plan will act as a blueprint for future trail and connection enhancements throughout the Sturgeon Valley.

The plan will be completed and presented to Council in the coming months.

If you have any questions of concerns, please contact us:

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