

Jay Ménard  
To the members of PEC,

The members of ACAC would like to strongly encourage council to support the development of an accessible pathway through the Gloucester deferred trail segment. While we appreciate that the residents have expressed concerns about providing an accessible pathway into the neighbourhood due to perceived concerns that it will open the area to less-than-desirable traffic, we do not believe that the solution to preventing crime in an area should be a heavy-handed approach that restricts key and valuable members of our society.

Accessible trails are not just for the disabled. Accessible trails support all members of our community. They support our elderly community, who may have mobility challenges and would benefit from a supportive pathway; they support families introducing young children to nature and pushing strollers through the area; and, of course, they allow people with disabilities to fully participate in all that the community offers, as opposed to putting up barriers and mandating that to access everything London has to offer, one must be able-bodied.

Accessible pathways, as we heard in the previous debates about the Medway Valley, also have a wonderfully unintentional benefit – when there is a defined pathway in place, not only does it make it easier for all people in our community to access a treasured environmental area, but they also increase the security of sensitive wildlife, fauna, and flora. Simply put, when there are defined paths, people tend to stay on defined paths and not wander off, or create their own – putting sensitive environmental elements at risk of being trampled or disturbed.

Right now, the area presents an unintentional barrier to accessibility. With AODA coming into full effect in 2025, we feel the onus should be on doing everything we can to make this community as accessible as possible. If we choose to not move forward with an accessible pathway in this area, we are now actively engaging in systemic ableism by turning an unintentional barrier into an intentional barrier.

Our hope is that the committee sees the benefits of an accessible trail, not only for the community that ACAC represents, but for all Londoners and for the environmental protection of the area impacted by the Gloucester Deferred trail segment.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I am happy to discuss this further with you.