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**Subject:** Budget Amendment – Greater Niagara Circle Route – Welland Canal Parkway Trail Extension

**Report to:** Regional Council

**Report date:** Thursday, June 24, 2021

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## **Recommendations**

1. That a one-time amendment to the previously adopted 2021 Niagara Region Operating Budget in the amount of \$200,000 **BE APPROVED** from the Greater Niagara Circle Route (GNCR) Reserve to fund a grant to the City of St. Catharines for an extension of the Welland Canal Parkway Trail north of Lakeshore Road as described in PW 26-2021 and that there be no impact on Niagara Region's 2021 tax levy and 2021 property tax rates.
2. That a one-time amendment to the previously adopted 2021 Niagara Region Operating Budget in the amount of \$50,000 **BE APPROVED** from the Greater Niagara Circle Route (GNCR) Reserve to fund Greater Niagara Circle Route wayfinding initiatives and/or implementation costs as described in PW 26-2021 and that there be no impact on Niagara Region's 2021 tax levy and 2021 property tax rates.

## **Key Facts**

- At the Public Works Committee meeting on May 11, 2021, committee approved two motions for Regional Council to consider a budget amendment at the June 24, 2021 meeting to fund an extension of the Welland Canal Parkway Trail and wayfinding initiatives for the GNCR using the GNCR Reserve as a funding source
- Use of reserves (and reserve funds) is limited to those approved by Council as part of the annual budget process. Any in-year use of reserves must comply with the Reserve and Reserve Funds Policy C-F-013 and Budget Control By-Law and are considered a budget amendment which requires 10 days' notice prior to council approval as per Public Notice Policy C-RC-004

## **Financial Considerations**

Approval of the amendment included in this report will not impact Niagara Region's 2021 tax levy or 2021 property tax rates, approved by Council on January 21, 2021 . As such, residents will not see a change to the Regional portion of their property tax bill (See Appendix I –2021 Operating Budget Amendment – Greater Niagara Circle Route).

The uncommitted balance in the GNCR Reserve is \$1,382,681 which was funded from prior year surpluses and a \$10,760 donation restricted for use on the GNCR. Approval of these motions would reduce the balance of the GNCR Reserve to \$1,132,681.

All Budget Amendments require notice to be posted on the Regional website 10 days prior to being approved by Council per Public Notice Policy C-RC-004. The item being recommended was provided with proper notice of proposed amendments to the 2021 Levy Operating Budget.

## **Analysis**

As detailed in TSC-C 5-2021 and PW 26-2021, extension of the Welland Canal Parkway Trail north of Lakeshore Road is directed towards creating a safe and convenient trail extension within the City of St. Catharines to be used by Niagara Region residents and tourists. This proposed work will address current operational and geometric deficiencies while offering active transportation connectivity to the north part of the trail along the Welland Canal. The project will be led by the City of St. Catharines in collaboration with the Transportation Services Division at the Niagara Region.

Staff discussed with the Greater Niagara Circle Route Sub-Committee the review of current wayfinding programs across a number of the municipalities to determine what wayfinding programs have been established and to decide on either procuring a consultant assignment that will review the current wayfinding and destination routing throughout the entire trail to establish a consistent navigation strategy using signage and architectural landmarks or direct the dollars to implementing a proposed strategy based on available municipal wayfinding practises. Following completion of the staff review, recommendations for enhancements and/or improvements to the trail will be discussed with the Greater Niagara Circle Route Sub-Committee and Transportation Steering Committee (TSC). Any cost implications associated with these recommendations above the current one-time amendment will be considered as part of future budget processes.

## **Alternatives Reviewed**

A net tax levy increase to fund these initiatives would impact regional tax rates and impact taxes billed by the local area municipalities and therefore is not recommended.

The decision to fund a grant to the City of St. Catharines and wayfinding consulting utilizing the GNCR Reserve could also be deferred and considered during the 2022 Regional Budget Process in alignment with normal practice.

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

Healthy and Vibrant Community - Foster a high quality of life through safe, healthy, and inclusive neighbourhoods through the delivery of quality, affordable and accessible human services.

Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning - Sustainable investments in Transportation, transit and infrastructure, while aligning infrastructure planning with preservation of the natural environment

## **Other Pertinent Reports**

- ICP 19-2013 March 6, 2013 Greater Niagara Circle Route – Asset Management and Management Issues
- Confidential PDS 4-2017 February 22, 2017
- CL-C 34-2018 June 14, 2018 Motion to Release Funds to Support Extension of the Welland Canal Parkway Trail
- PW 26-2021 – Greater Niagara Circle Route – Welland Canal Parkway Trail Extension
- TSC-C 5-2021 – Greater Niagara Circle Route – Welland Canal Parkway Trail Extension

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**Recommended by:**  
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Commissioner of Public Works (Interim)  
Public Works Department

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**Submitted by:**

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Acting Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared in consultation with Dan Ane, Manager Program Financial Support*

**Appendices**

Appendix I - 2021 Operating Budget Amendment – Greater Niagara Circle Route