
Trails in Ontario: Reaching New Heights Using a Different Approach

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at the Ontario East Municipal Conference, September 16, 2004



Today's Objectives

- ◆ Introduction of “A Development Manual for Community-based ATV Tourism Product”
 - **History** of its development
 - **What** is the Community-based approach?
 - **Who** can use this approach?
 - **How** is it different?
 - **How** does it work?
 - **Outcomes** of this approach
- ◆ Case Study: How the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance is reaching “New Heights” using this approach
- ◆ Questions



History

- ◆ 2000 – 2001 Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC)/FedNor /Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) and 2 communities invested in the development of a planning manual, “*A Development Manual for a Community-based ATV Tourism Product*” which was pilot tested in Elliot Lake and Mattawa – Total Investment (manual and trail systems) \$690,000.

History

- ◆ An independent consultant was hired to create a model for communities to use to develop tourism products based on experiences on a shared use trail system.
- ◆ Main focus was ATV experiences, however, the model and the manual can be adapted to many other trail tourism products.
- ◆ It was designed to address today’s economic opportunities and challenges.

History

- ◆ The manual was released in 2003 with an official launch in January 2004. The manual has been distributed across the province, Canada and some US states.
- ◆ The CTC, the CATV, the OTC, the TCT and many Ministries have identified the manual as a good tool to guide trail development and investment for recreation and tourism uses.
- ◆ ATVOntario, a marketing alliance of 5 communities/destinations and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation uses the manual as a quality control tool for participating in the Alliance.



What is the “Community-based” Approach?

- ◆ This approach allows a community/region/destination to develop their own plan for shared use trails through a template approach.
- ◆ Its objective is to maximize economic development benefits, through tourism, for the whole community while respecting all environmental and cultural values.
- ◆ It provides planning principles that can be applied to recreational trail development, and if desired, to tourism product development in a destination.



What is the “Community-based” Approach?

- ◆ Based on a shared-use trail system, which is a network of trails in a community that can serve both motorized and non-motorized uses.
- ◆ Shared-use does not mean all trails are open to all users at the same time.
- ◆ While the system as a whole is shared-use, some trail segments may be single-use or shared only for defined purposes.

What is the “Community-based” Approach?

- ◆ It allows for the participation of different interest groups/clubs/businesses/local government to work together to decide on their own future.
- ◆ It provides an equal voice to all users of the resource.
- ◆ It allows the community to decide what their trails will be used for and why, where they will find the \$ to operate, what needs to be included in the operational /business plan to lead to their sustainability and success.

Who Can Use This Approach?

- ◆ All communities – typically defined by the boundaries of a single municipality or First Nations or multiple municipalities/First Nations, depends on capacity of area.
- ◆ Currently 5 destinations/communities - Elliot Lake, Mattawa, Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance, Georgian Bay Trax (Parry Sound), Cochrane.

How is it Different?

- ◆ In the past, most trails were developed by local user groups/clubs wishing to support their recreational lifestyle, often led by a single user group such as the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC).
- ◆ Trails were managed by volunteers. Costs of insurance, maintenance, etc. were reasonable and \$\$ to cover the costs were raised through local fundraising events.
- ◆ Land use issues were as not as complex as today's issues, less provincial and environmental regulations.
- ◆ Trails were mostly used for local recreational enjoyment, however, tourism was recognized as a spin-off benefit.

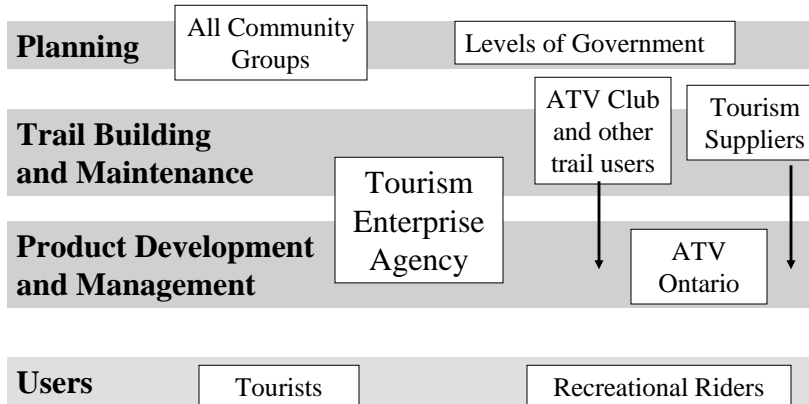
How is it Different?

- ◆ Today, trails are very costly to develop and manage (insurance, maintenance, engineering for bridges, etc.) – there is a need for business plan.
- ◆ Liability and insurance costs impacting the ability of volunteers to raise enough \$\$ for trails – difficult for social clubs to manage trail systems.
- ◆ Increased pressure from all user groups, especially ATVers, to use trail systems - proper planning and management must be achieved at the local level.
- ◆ Increased pressure on municipalities and Crown to allow ATV use on municipal roads (Regulation 316) and Crown Land. Many opposing viewpoints.

How is it Different?

- ◆ The community-based approach deals with today's issues of trail development through a business approach based on tourism development.
- ◆ It is based on 6 Fundamental Principles:
 1. Stimulus to Economic Development – tourism based approach to working together with local recreational benefits.
 2. Good Business Planning that links communities to travel markets.
 3. Responsibility to all interests and users with fundamental respect for public and environmental concerns.
 4. Destination-centred tourism; local planning and decision-making within a Provincial framework.
 5. Shared use trails – equal voice for all.
 6. Goal is long-term sustainability.

Organization Involvement



How Does It Work?

- ◆ There is a template process that has been designed to document a logical planning process for the utilization of existing trail resources and/or the enhancement/ development of new trails.
- ◆ It helps to address the requirements for reasonable care, due diligence and fiscal management as required by various agencies/governments, municipalities, user groups and land use managers.
- ◆ Two stages – Pre Feasibility Assessment and Business Plan

Stage 1 - Pre Feasibility Assessment

- ◆ Templates 1 to 13 – Planning Process
- ◆ Assists in determining whether the project direction is feasible/practical and identifies who should be involved from the community and their expectations.
- ◆ Identifies general costs associated with trail development and operation.
- ◆ Refers to the Community's Strategic Plan.
- ◆ Assists in documenting a plan for review by MNR, other agencies, community groups, municipalities, funding sources and insurance providers.

Stage 2 - Business Plan

- ◆ Templates 14 to 26
- ◆ Recognizes that trail development and operations need a business approach in order to be sustainable
- ◆ These templates will assist with partnership development and the implementation of the project
- ◆ They provides direction for Tourism Product development, if desired by destination.

Outcomes of this Approach

- ◆ **Builds Community** by getting people to work together towards a common goal. Can help to resolve user conflicts.
- ◆ **Builds Business Capacity, Capability and Commerce** by connecting the trail users/developers to the tourism businesses/ promoters and economic development officers. Creates packaging.
- ◆ **Reach New Heights** by becoming a tourism destination based on shared use trail products.



For More Information

- ◆ The manual and executive summary are available online at atvontario.com “About Us” or by emailing kendra.adema@mtr.gov.on.ca

