

## **Lanark County approves purchase of abandoned CP Rail corridor**

At its regular meeting Wednesday night, Lanark County Council authorized the Warden and CAO to sign lease and donation agreements to acquire ownership of a portion of abandoned Canadian Pacific Rail corridor from Sturgess Road in Montague Township to the Renfrew/Ottawa border.

“The purchase of this rail corridor is a historic opportunity for Lanark County and it offers exciting possibilities for Lanark County residents and visitors,” said Warden Gail Code (Drummond/North Elmsley Deputy Reeve). “We have been working hard for many years to enhance the quality of life of our residents through an extensive network of trails. This corridor continues that work by adding a valuable multi-use transportation venue as well as a corridor for fibre-optic networks to deliver communications.”

In 2010, CP announced its decision to discontinue and sell a 296-kilometre stretch of rail line between Smiths Falls and Mattawa. In 2011, the County of Renfrew, Lanark County and the Township of Papineau-Cameron formed a partnership to engage in discussions with CP, as the rail company had expressed its preference to sell the entire corridor to one entity.

Lanark County’s portion of the corridor is 61.2 km in length and 27.5 metres wide, with about 37 road crossings and nine bridges that average 120 feet in length. This section encompasses 440 acres and is appraised at \$15 million.

Antec Appraisal Group appraised the entire corridor at almost \$77.7 million. Of this, about \$77.2 million will be used by the partners for the official tax receipt portion of the purchase, with a \$500,000 cash portion divided amongst them to be used in three closing phases over the next two years. This timeframe will allow for the property transfer descriptions to be generated for segments of the corridor, starting with the most easterly section. The partners have also agreed to lease the lands for a nominal fee (\$10 per year plus corresponding municipal taxes) while the transfers are proceeding.

Various cost-sharing options were reviewed and a formula was developed based on averaging appraisal value percentage, length percentage and area percentage of the corridor in each jurisdiction. Lanark County holds 19 per cent of the corridor. Renfrew County’s portion is 72 per cent. Lanark County has authorized spending up to \$180,000 from reserves for the acquisition, survey, legal and environment studies.

“The acquisition is a huge milestone for the project and work will continue over the next several years to get the corridor into trail shape,” said Lanark County CAO, Kurt Greaves. “The county will be working with the local municipalities, the Lanark County Trails Corporation, the public and other partners to establish a destination to promote active living, tourism and economic development.”

“Canadian Pacific is pleased to have this almost 300-kilometre right of way maintained as a continuous corridor and the transfer of it into public hands,” said Kevin Paul of Canadian Pacific. “The partnership of County of Renfrew, County of Lanark and the Township of Papineau-Cameron is an

excellent example of how a group with a common goal can make a positive decision for generations to come. We commend your vision and look forward to the transformation of this discontinued rail corridor.”

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