



FAQs: New speed bumps at Tommy Thompson Park / Leslie Street Spit December 2011

Tommy Thompson Park on the Leslie Street Spit is an urban wilderness park that provides habitat for plants, birds, fish, mammals, insects, amphibians and snakes. It is designated as a globally significant Important Bird Area and a locally Environmentally Significant Area. The park is also beloved by city residents as a place to “get away” from the city, experience nature, and walk or leisurely ride without worrying about vehicle traffic.

Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) currently manages the park and needs to ensure it remains a natural place for wildlife, as well as a place where all park visitors can enjoy the outdoors with their friends and families without impacting the plants and animals that call the park home.

In November 2011 speed bumps were installed along the Multi-Use Trail (road) from Cell One to the Lighthouse to slow down cyclists who travel through the area at high speeds that pose a safety risk to other park users and wildlife. Leisurely cycling is a welcome activity at the park.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How is the public involved in trail management decisions at TTP?

TRCA takes a consultative approach to park management. From 2005 through 2010 TRCA regularly hosted public meetings regarding Master Plan implementation, including the TTP Trails Master Plan. Additionally the former TTP Advisory Committee and the current TTP User Group (comprised of a variety of park users, including cyclists) meet and correspond on a regular basis about park matters. Based on this public consultation, speed cyclists were identified as a safety concern. To address this safety concern TRCA installed speed bumps to slow cyclists down.

If you would like to make a comment or suggestion about TTP, we'd love to hear from you. Please send your comments to ttp@trca.on.ca

I'm an athlete and use the Spit to train; it is the best place in Toronto to ride my bike fast without worrying about cars. Why can't I ride fast at the Spit anymore?

Tommy Thompson Park is not intended to be an athletic training ground. It is a unique park in Toronto, where wildlife habitat is protected and enhanced. Cycling at fast speeds is not a compatible activity at a wilderness park. TRCA is also very concerned about the risk of speed cyclists to other park users like children, hikers and slower cyclists.

I have never seen an accident at the Spit. Why install the speed bumps now?

The section of the Multi-Use Trail with the new speed bumps was repaved in 2010 and TRCA noticed an increase in the number and speed of cyclists. A total of 11 incidents involving cyclists were recorded at Tommy Thompson Park (TTP) in 2011.

Have you considered painting a line down the road to separate cyclists from pedestrians?

Yes, separating park users will help reduce the risk of cyclist-pedestrian collisions; however it will not reduce the risk of high speed cyclists hitting wildlife. Furthermore, TRCA estimates 250,000 people (bird watchers, nature lovers, walkers, runners, roller-bladers, cyclists, etc.) visit TTP each year and while cyclists are a dominant user group, high speed cycling impacts other users' enjoyment of the park. TRCA has received many complaints about cyclists travelling very fast through the park from users who are concerned about their personal safety and the safety of resident wildlife.

How is wildlife at risk?

In addition to the risk to other park users, cyclists who are travelling at high speeds are also more likely to be involved with a collision with wildlife, particularly snakes that bask on the road. Snakes are attracted to the road because it heats up in the sun allowing them to be more active. Unfortunately snakes that are basking on the road have no chance to escape being run over by a cyclist when they approach very quickly; and the cyclist has little chance of avoiding the snake because they see them too late and are travelling too fast to avoid them. Other wildlife species, including mammals, ground-nesting birds, as well as invertebrates like caterpillars, are also endangered by speeding cyclists.

Don't the dump trucks kill snakes and wildlife too? What's being done about them?

Yes, trucks access the site during the week for lake filling activities and sometimes kill wildlife. Trucks are required at the site to continue building the park. The road that the trucks use already has speed humps to slow their speed and trucks do not use the section of road where the new speed bumps were installed. Furthermore, many more cyclists use the park than trucks, and the cumulative impact of both speed cyclists and trucks can have a significant impact on wildlife.

Have you considered putting up a barricade that will stop wildlife from using the roads or install snake basking structures to get them off the road?

The park is one of the most significant natural areas in Toronto and is a sanctuary for wildlife. Wildlife use roads and trails as direct habitat (i.e., snake basking) and, like us, they also use roads and trails to move around within the park as they carry out their day to day activities. By preventing or limiting wildlife movement at the park, we take away part of their habitat and may limit their ability to survive at the Spit. Alternative snake basking structures are an experimental approach to reducing roadkill and may work in specific locations, however given the ample

amount of asphalt road available and the snake population at the park, it is unlikely they would be effective at significantly reducing snake roadkill.

What about placing a cut within the speed bumps so that cyclists can still comfortably bike at the park?

The intent of the speed bumps is to slow fast cyclists down. The speed bumps can be comfortably cycled over at 10-15 km/h, which is an appropriately safe speed for an urban wilderness park.