



Blair-Preston Trail and Pedestrian Bridge Environmental Assessment

Dec 19, 2023





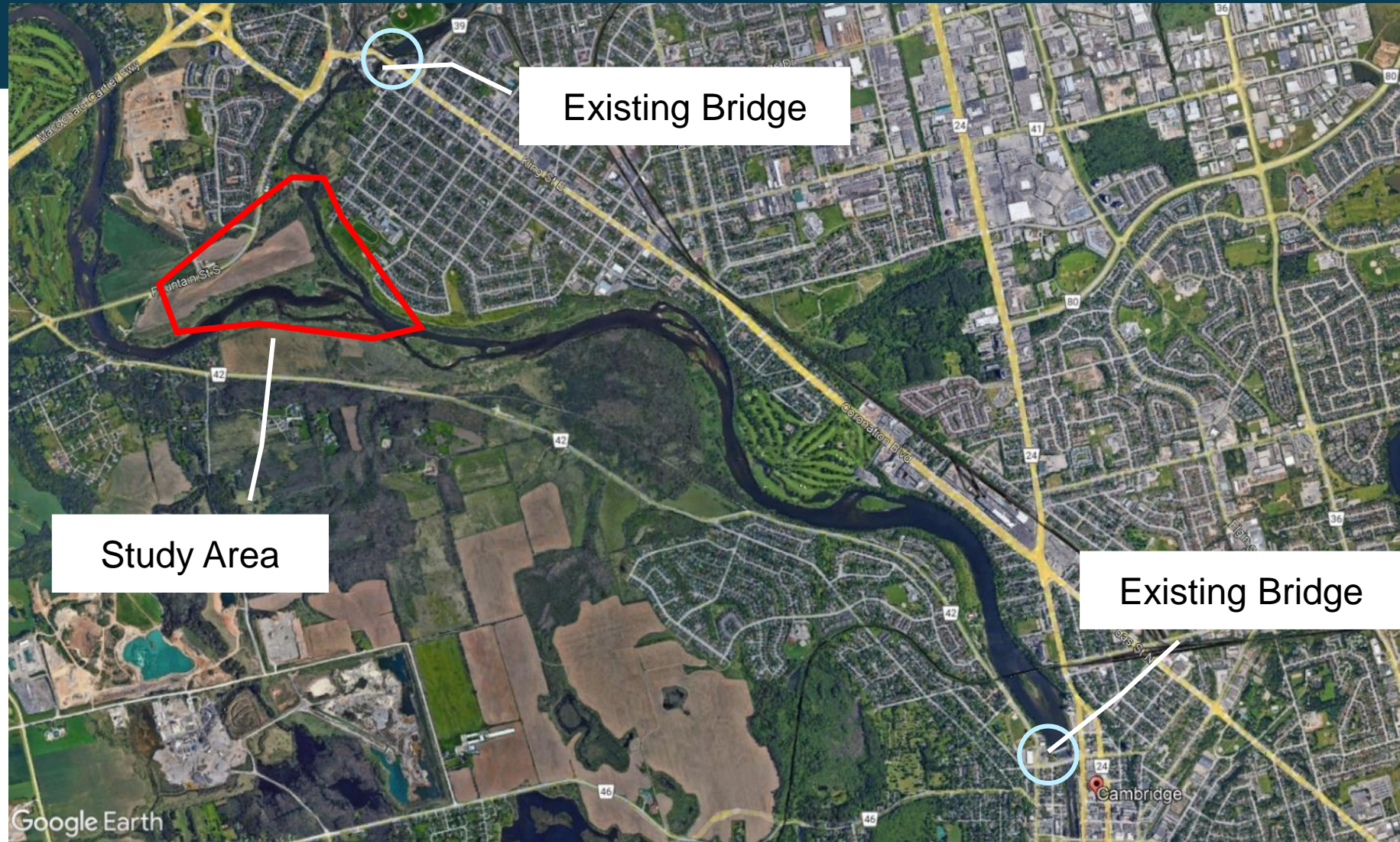
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Project Background

- The City of Cambridge Trails Master Plan (2010)
- Region's EA for Fountain / King Street/ Shantz Hill Improvements (2012)
- The Region of Waterloo's Active Transportation Master Plan (2014)
- The City's Cycling Master Plan (2020)

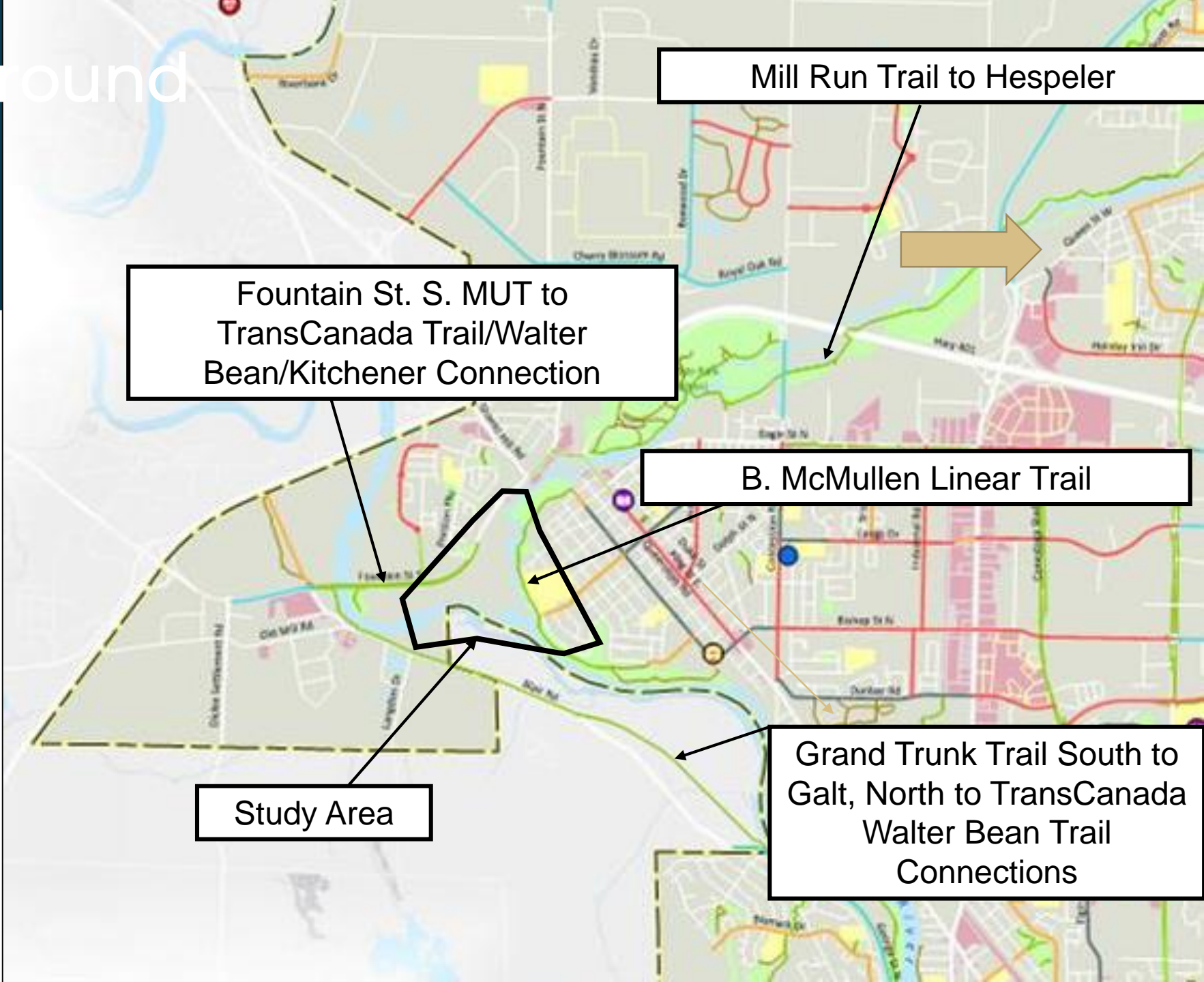
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Project Background

Trail Connection Opportunities

- Regionally Significant Trail Connections Linking Blair/Galt/Preston/Hespeler
- Trans Canada Trail/Walter Bean Trail Connection at Morningside Ave Crossing 401. Connects to Trans Canada Trail Infrastructure up to Waterloo
- Fountain Street South MUT



Environmental Assessment Overview

Following the Fountain Street Corridor Alternative being screened out early in the EA, three Alternative routes were considered, as well as an option to do nothing.

- Alternative 1: Northern-most route
- Alternative 2: Link with Dover St. S
- Alternative 3: Southern-most route

All include a trail along the northern edge of the field to minimize impacts to the active agricultural field.



Environmental Assessment Overview

The Environmental Assessment included:

Various background studies:

- Vegetation
- Fish habitat/aquatic conditions
- Archaeology
- Geotechnical
- Floodplain modeling
- Land use



Environmental Assessment Overview

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- E.g., Impacts to existing trees, bird habitats, wetlands, species at risk

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- E.g., Trail connectivity, potential for trespassing/off trail uses

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

- E.g., Impacts to archaeological and cultural heritage resources

LAND USE AND POLICY

- E.g., Compatibility with City and Region policies and plans, area of rare lands affected

TECHNICAL ENVIRONMENT

- E.g., Flood impacts to adjacent property

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

- E.g., Comparative capital and operational costs

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- How well does it address the overall Problem/Opportunity Statement (to provide a pedestrian//cycling connection between Blair and Preston)?

Environmental Assessment Overview

Alternative 1, the northern route was selected.

Advantages:

- Creates the shortest trail connection.
- Least likely to encourage trail users to veer off-trail and trespass on rare lands.
- Farthest distance from the confluence of the Speed and Grand Rivers, a sensitive waterfowl wintering area.

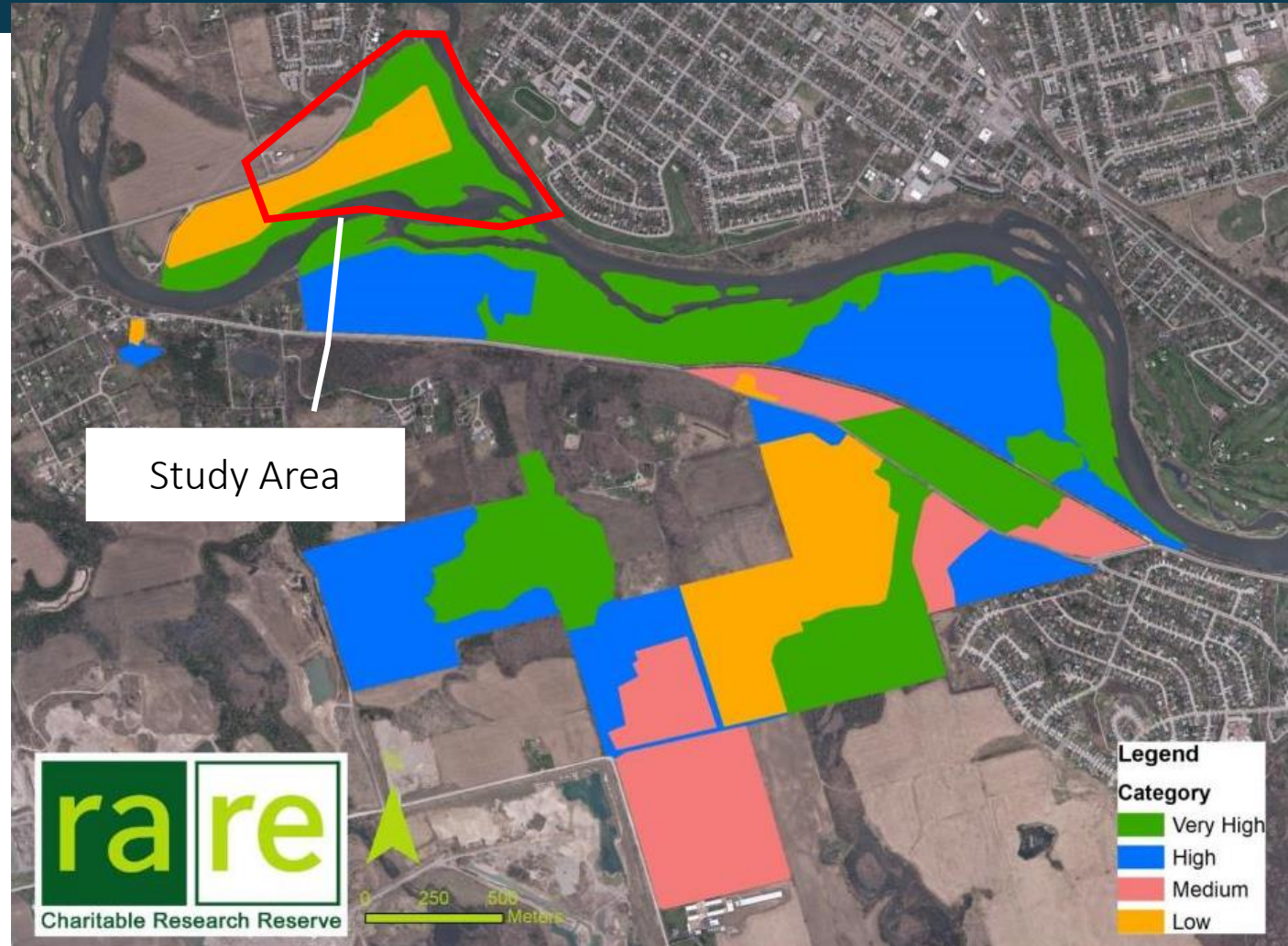


Key Considerations

Rare's Environmental Management Plan shows:

- Yellow (Low Protection):
 - Permits newly created public trails/open access areas
 - Focus on recreation/education/agriculture
- Green (Very High Protection):
 - Low impact uses
 - Focus on ecological restoration/invasive species management

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Key Considerations

Least disturbance to winter waterfowl and raptor habitat

Mitigation to minimize effects:

- Construct northern route
- Use “living fence” (thick line of native shrubs) to discourage wandering off trail
- Monitor waterfowl and raptor

populations

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Key Considerations

To minimize effects:

- Locate bridge where minimal tree removal required
- Replant trees at 10:1 ratio
- Work with Preston High School on clean-ups/stewardship programs



Key Considerations

Confluence of the Speed and Grand Rivers is an important site for Indigenous communities.

- Archaeological studies to date have identified that the area is significant.
- Stage 3 Archaeological Assessment required in subsequent phase



Next Steps

Issue Notice of Project Completion

- Staff's recommendation is to post the draft EA project file report for the 30-day public review period and bring the study to a close
- The rare Charitable reserve property owners are not interested in advancing further property discussions at this time.
- Additional options are outlined in the report, which would be available to Council





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