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## TRAILS CONNECTING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM – 2026

### Information Sheet and Application Guide

#### 1. Introduction

The County of Simcoe has dedicated funding for 2026 to assist local municipalities in the development of active transportation and recreational trail opportunities, with a focus on enhancing and/or expanding the trail network for non-motorized uses. The following information is intended to outline the basic information regarding the Trails Connecting Communities Program (TCCP).

For enquiries relating to the Trails Connecting Communities Program, please contact Julie Nolan, TCCP Coordinator at 705-726-9300 x1540 or [julie.nolan@simcoe.ca](mailto:julie.nolan@simcoe.ca).

#### 2. Eligibility

The TCCP funding is available to local municipalities within the County of Simcoe. Trail projects may be initiated by, and in collaboration with, community groups, trail associations, recreation associations, institutions, crown corporations and Conservation Authorities. The local municipality must be the primary applicant and be financially committed to the project.

Collaboration on an application between multiple municipalities is eligible and encouraged. These types of projects would include shared facilities and/or cross boarder trail systems within multiple municipalities.

It should be noted that the TCCP is a reimbursement program. Applying municipalities should be prepared to incur all of the costs of the project and then request reimbursement from the County of Simcoe at project completion.

As a minimum, projects are required to meet the following criteria:

- One of the following:
  - The proposed project is considered the implementation or refurbishment of a major capital piece of trail infrastructure i.e. bridge, culvert, flood prevention, etc., OR
  - The proposed project will consist of a sub-regional connection or alignment with a neighboring municipality or with a major provincially or federally identified trail i.e. Garanaskis, Trans-Canada, etc., OR
  - The proposed will provide a new connection that will link the settlement areas with the rural areas of the local municipality, OR
  - The proposed consists of a new trail connecting the community with a public facility, OR

- The proposed project will address a major safety concern, which may include trail maintenance outside of your ongoing municipal maintenance schedule.
- The proposed will be constructed to specifications that improve trail accessibility to people with disabilities.
- Construction will begin in 2026 and be completed within a two-year period, completing before December 17, 2027
- Project/trail design is satisfactory to County staff (i.e. access, signage, width, surface material, etc.)
- All construction activities will occur in accordance with applicable policies, bylaws, standards and regulations.
- That any projects including wayfinding/signage, have also applied for the Tourism, Culture, & Sport Enhancement Fund  
<https://experience.simcoe.ca/resources/tourism-culture-sport-grant/>

### 3. Ineligibility

An applicant municipality is only eligible to apply for TCCP funding if they have completed the previous project approved by the County. The outstanding project must be completed three weeks prior to the first day of the primary intake date to allow for a pre-consultation to occur and closeout all accounts and transfer payments.

### 4. Available Assistance

The assistance is available in tiers based on project type. Projects will be funded up to 50% of the total eligible costs, whereby the County matches the municipal contributions.

#### **Tier 1 – a maximum grant of \$100,000**

Projects may include major capital projects that create new facilities or refurbish major infrastructure. These projects will require major funding towards example, bridge replacements, installation of underpasses, trail/road realignments, maintain trail usage, comprehensive parks/recreation master plans, strategic mobility plans, etc. Does not include maintenance.

#### **Tier 2 – a maximum grant of \$50,000**

Projects may include large undertakings of road cycling facilities that connect settlements with the rural areas, earthworks to create a new trail connection inter-municipally or municipal partnerships, safety wayfinding, making trail components AODA compliant, comprehensive parks/recreation master plans, strategic mobility plans, etc. Does not include maintenance.

#### **Tier 3 – a maximum grant of \$20,000**

Projects may include trail head configuring and signage, safety, fencing repairs or installations, trail furniture, trail technical and feasibility studies, maintenance, etc.

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## 5. Expenditures

### a. Expenses eligible to receive matching funding include:

- Construction materials, bridges, signage, trail furniture i.e. benches, bike racks, etc., access barriers, ramps, trailhead shelters/pavilions, new trail surfacing material, contracted workers and equipment
- Technical and/or Feasibility studies
- Life saving safety equipment
- Consultant fees or contract fulfillment/build-out of works

### b. Ineligible expenses include:

- Wages for part-time and full-time municipal employees or trail group
- Municipal equipment costs
- Municipal employee mileage
- Regular resurfacing and maintenance
- Property taxes, insurance
- Legal and/or Administration Costs
- Food related expenditures – food expenses for banquets, dinners, fundraisers and celebrations
- HST

## 6. Application Process & Requirements

The **primary intake** period for TCCP applications is from **January 19, 2026 to February 20, 2026**. Applications received during this period will be considered based on their proposed project scope and compliance with the TCCP criteria. Should applications be received after February 20, 2026 4:30pm, consideration will be given based on any remaining funds on a first come-first served basis. The following materials are to be submitted in support of a complete application:

- Trails Connecting Communities Program Application Form
- Letter briefly identifying how the project will benefit the local community and the active transportation network within the County of Simcoe. The letter should also address trail connectivity, accessibility, economic benefit, respect for the environment and sustainable trail development
- Map identifying the location and length of the proposed trail segment where work is to be completed
- Outline of proposed trail specifications – width, height, surface material, signage, etc.
- Cost estimate of project
- Pre-construction photos of the project site (where applicable)
- Project plan with proposed timelines
- Proposed construction/engineering drawings (if any)

**Note: Any required permits (i.e. Conservation Authority) shall be obtained prior to commencement of construction. Depending on the project proposal and location, funding approval may be contingent on submitting supporting documentation that demonstrates no negative impact to surrounding environmental features.**

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Applications and supporting materials are to be submitted to:

Trails Connecting Communities Program  
c/o Julie Nolan, TCCP Coordinator  
County of Simcoe, 1110 Highway 26  
Midhurst, ON L9X 1N6  
705-726-9300 Ext. 1540 or

Successful applicants will be notified, in writing, of the County of Simcoe's commitment to fund their respective project. Following receipt of the County's Letter of Commitment, applicants will be subject to periodic project progress updates over the course of the project.

## 7. Obligations

By receiving assistance funding from the County of Simcoe, applicants acknowledge that certain obligations must be adhered to. These include the following:

- All projects receiving TCCP 2026 funds will be completed within two years, by **December 17, 2027**.
- Upon completion of the project, the County of Simcoe requires the following materials to be submitted by the local municipality to the TCCP Coordinator by **December 17, 2027** to confirm the eligibility of the project:
  - A signed letter confirming the works completed, the amount of money spent by the local municipality on the project, and the amount of money requested through the TCCP program (not including HST).
  - Confirmation that the trail or trail infrastructure has been constructed to comply with Trail Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
  - Post-construction photos of the project site (where applicable)

Please note that failure to provide the required information may result in a reduction or withdrawal of the County of Simcoe's funding commitment. Funds granted through the TCCP are not transferable. The County of Simcoe must approve, in writing, **prior** to any significant change in the use of committed funds. Unused funds, or funds that were spent incorrectly, must be returned to Simcoe County. Signage related to the trail project construction shall acknowledge the County of Simcoe as a partner in the project and shall be reviewed by the TCCP Coordinator, and all applicants will save harmless the County of Simcoe for any liabilities, problems or issues that arise either during or after the applicable TCCP funding process.

## 8. Trails Accessibility Standards

Further to the above Section 6, titled Obligations, municipalities are to follow the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)** standard for the design of public spaces. This standard ensures that exterior paths of travel, recreational trails, beach access routes, outdoor play spaces and parking areas are made to be accessible to all people. Please consult your local Accessibility Committee or the Government of

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Ontario AODA for up-to-date requirements and guidance. Requirements for the design of recreational trails include:

- Clear Width: 3 metre minimum to allow two-way traffic (1.5 metres each direction)
- Clear Height: 2.1 metres headroom above trails
- Trail Signage: signage must be in accordance with Regional Tourism Organization 7 Standards
- Surface Material: trail surfaces must be firm, stable and accessible. Please note the following:
  - Concrete or asphalt: Accessible
  - Crushed stone: Moderately accessible
  - Grass/ gravel/ wood chips: Not accessible

## **9. Relinquishing of Funds**

Should the municipality not complete the approved project, the municipality shall inform the project coordinator in writing that they are unable to complete the project and release the committed funds back into the TCCP reserve fund. Municipalities can reapply with the same project at a later date when they are ready to proceed with the project.

If the municipality does not confirm in writing that the project is incomplete and does not provide confirmation that the project has in fact commenced, the County will assume those funds are relinquished by default on the two-year anniversary of its award, and defer those funds back to the TCCP reserve fund.