

STAFF REPORT: Town of The Blue Mountains Planning Department



REPORT TO: Mayor and Members of Council
MEETING DATE: Wednesday, October 15, 2008
REPORT NO.: PL.08.108
SUBJECT: Application for Zoning By-law Amendment
 Blue Mountain Resorts Ltd.
 Part Lots 15 & 16, Concessions 1 & 2;
 Town of The Blue Mountains

PREPARED BY: Robert Armstrong,
 Manager of Development Planning & IS

A. Recommendations

THAT Council does receive Planning Staff Report PL.08.108, “Application for Zoning By-law Amendment – Blue Mountain Resorts Orchard Lodge and parking expansion, Part Lots 15 and 16, Concessions 1 and 2, Town of The Blue Mountains”;

AND THAT Planning Staff support the Application for Zoning By-law Amendment for the following:

- i. modify the Ski Facility SF zone to recognize the road re-alignment and the location of the lodge and to rezone the proposed new parking lot area from the Development D zone to the Parking P zone;
- ii. establish a new minimum front and interior side yard of 7 metres for the lodge in the Ski Facility SF zone;
- iii. permit parking 0 metres from a public street other than a County Road;
- iv. zone all lands within the Holding –h symbol with the requirements for removal being Site Plan Approval and the requisite Development Agreement and clearance and approvals where applicable from the applicable Conservation Authorities.

B. Background

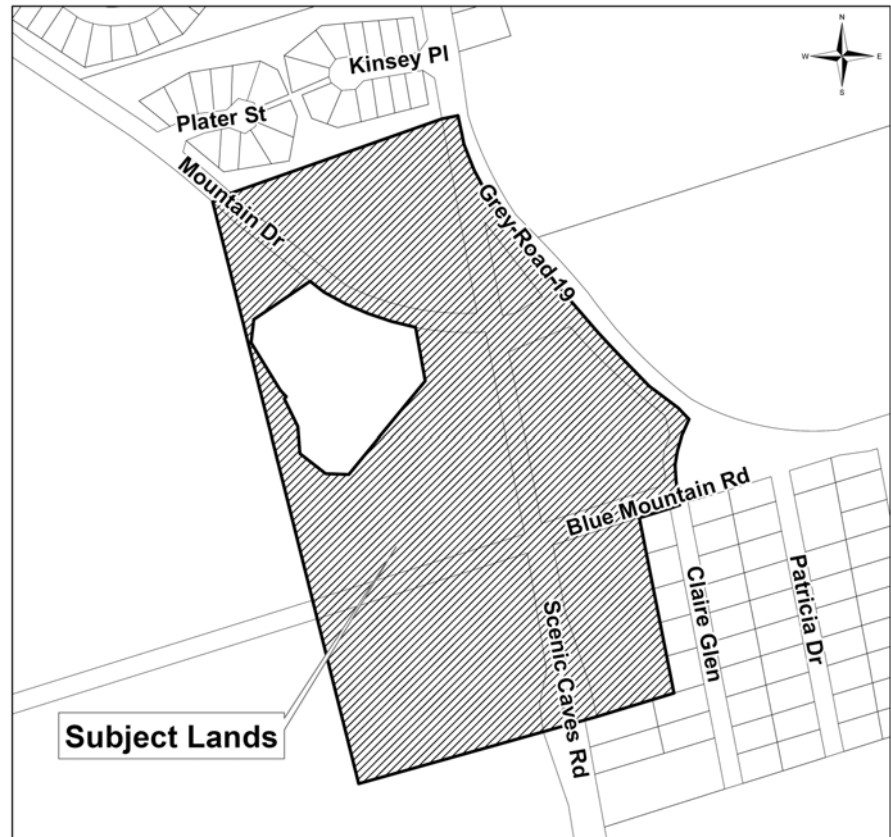
The purpose of this Application for Zoning By-Law Amendment is to consider a request to establish a new 3,790 square metre base lodge and new parking facilities in conjunction with the expansion of orchard ski runs at the south end of the Resort. In addition to the modifications to the existing zoning, the proponent is also requesting the following:

- a reduction in the minimum required yard setback of 12 metres from a public street;
- a reduction in the required 35 metres setback from a County Road;
- a reduction in the minimum yard setback of 15 metres from a residential zone; and
- to permit an increase in the 10 metres maximum height limitation for the base lodge.

For the parking areas, the proponent is also seeking a variance to the minimum 1.5 metre setback from a property line as they abut public streets only. The development proposed under this application is also being supported by the construction of a new intersection (round-a-bout) at Grey Road 19, Mountain Drive and Scenic Caves Road by the County of Grey.

The subject proposal will be serviced by municipal water and sewer system. Some extensions to servicing will be required.

The surrounding uses include existing residential uses to the north and southeast with future residential lands to the east, and recreational ski amenities associated with the Niagara Escarpment to the west and south west. It should be noted that there is a watercourse that runs parallel to Scenic Caves Road on the west side and another flowing northeast just south of the Weider property that the subject lands encompasses.

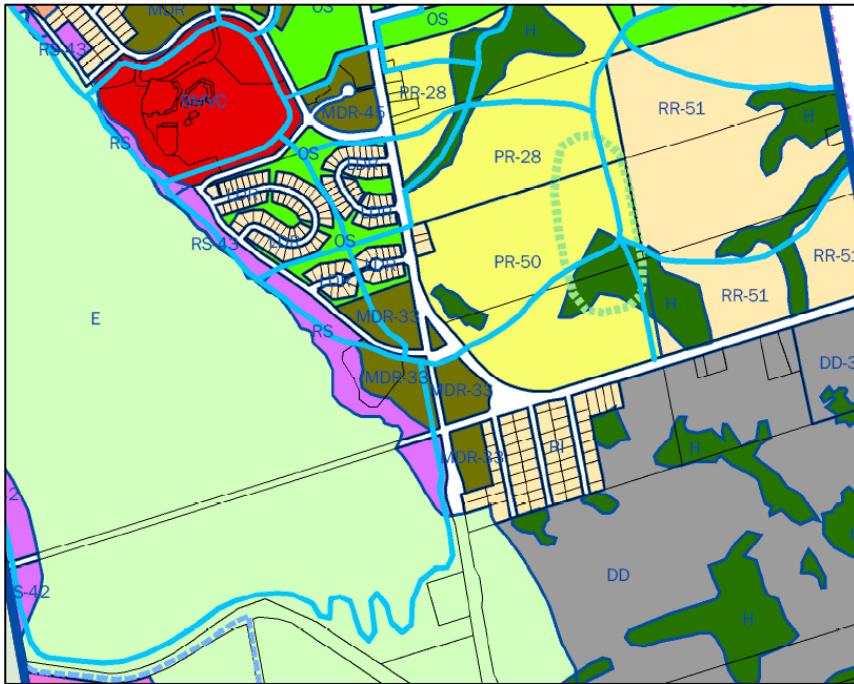


In support of the application, the proponent has submitted a Planning Justification Report, Master Concept Plan, Stormwater Management Report, Transportation Plan, Preliminary Site Servicing, proposed elevations and cross-section. In addition, a supplementary report was presented related to concerns related to skier traffic crossing County Road 19 and exiting from Claire Glen Road.

Official Plan

The Town of The Blue Mountains Official Plan designates the subject lands as Medium Density Residential Exception 33 (MDR-33) and Recreational Ski (RS).

A majority of the development proposal would be within the MDR-33 designation, containing all the proposed parking and lodge. The RS designation would comprise the ski terrain and related lifts.



The intent and purpose of the Medium Density Residential (MDR) designation is to provide a wide range of residential dwelling types and recreational facilities. Permitted uses include single detached and semi-detached dwellings, horizontally and vertically attached dwellings, townhouse, rowhouse or link dwellings, ancillary residential accommodation uses and recreational facilities.

Exception 33, under Section 13 of the Official Plan which specifically applies to the south end of the resort states the following:

These lands may also be permitted to contain the uses permitted in the "Recreational Ski" and "Blue Mountain Resort Commercial" designations. The maximum yield of residential dwelling units within this overall area shall not exceed 100 units. In order to ensure that development in this area proceeds in an orderly manner, development shall be limited to day use parking. No other development of permitted uses may take place until the proponent prepares and acquires Council's approval of a comprehensive site plan for this area to illustrate the location, size, height and massing of all buildings and structures, and the parking, access, pedestrian circulation and landscaping of the entire area. Prior to consideration of any such other development on these lands, Council must also be satisfied that there will be adequate parking in accordance with the provisions of Section 4.8.2(11).

This proposed Amendment includes an overall concept plan for the development of the south end in accordance with the provisions of the Official Plan. It is our opinion that the concept plan is consistent with the policies of the Official Plan. With regard to parking, the recent draft parking study by the Town has included that there is an adequate supply of parking. This review considered the Orchard expansion and the additional parking being provided with this proposal.

Zoning By-law

The subject lands are zoned Development (D), Recreational Ski Facility (SF) and Parking (P) within the Township of Collingwood Zoning By-law 83-40. The proponent is requesting to establish a new 3,790 square metre base lodge and new parking facilities in conjunction with the expansion of orchard ski runs at the south end of the Resort; and with the road re-alignment required for the round-a-bout the zoning boundaries also need adjusting.

Based on the plan drawings submitted with the application, the following below details the relief required to be in compliance with the Zoning By-law.

Orchard Lodge

As proposed, the lodge would be located 7.1 metres from a proposed relocated Scenic Caves Road (new Grey Road 119) that will occur in conjunction with the construction of the round-a-bout. The Recreational Ski Facility (SF) zone requires a minimum yard setback of 12 metres from the public street and 9 metres from any lot line.

The above noted setback to Scenic Caves Road also requires relief from Section 5.18(e) of the Zoning By-law, as a 35 metre setback is required from the centreline of Grey Road 119.

The proposed lodge would be located to the east of the Weider residential lot (zoned Rural Estate Residential (RERa)) at a distance of 7.0 metres from the lot line. The provisions of the Recreational Ski Facility (SF) zone require a minimum yard setback of 15 metres from a residential zone.

The original public meeting notice noted a request to exceed the maximum height for the lodge which is 10 metres. Height is defined in the Zoning By-law as the average finished grade of the front elevation to a point midway between the peak and eaves. The applicant has provided further information on this request and has indicated that they no longer need relief from the maximum height.

The proponent prepared a cross-section to identify the potential visual impact of the lodge in relation to the reduction in setback. With the proposed grading and the pedestrian activity being limited to the hill side of the development, it is our opinion that this variance to the By-law is acceptable. The proposed reduction from the adjacent residential dwelling would also appear appropriate in that the residential dwelling is part MDR designation for the development of the area and that the residential lot is quite large and well buffered from the proposed lodge.

Parking

Blue Mountain Resort has a vacant parcel of land just west of the Claire Glen Subdivision. The development proposal is to convert these lands into a parking lot to join with the parking to the north of these lands to handle the capacity expected with the

development of the south end of the resort. These lands are currently zoned Development (D) in the Zoning By-law and an amendment is required to rezone the lands to the Parking (P) zone and to establish a new minimum setback of 0 metres along the abutting local roads. The provisions of the Parking (P) zone requires that parking spaces shall not be closer than 1.5 metres to any lot line. It should be noted that the parking will be located at least 10 metres from a Residential zone (ie. Prices Subdivision).

The intent is to access these parking lots off of the road allowance between Lots 15 and 16, Concession 1 which connects Claire Glen Road to Scenic Caves Road. It is proposed that approximately 437 spaces would be located south of the road allowance and 449 spaces to the north. Currently there is an existing parking lot south of Plan 915 Subdivision. This lot is proposed to be reconfigured as a result of the round-a-bout construction and the new focus of day skiers being the new lodge. The revision could potentially accommodate approximately 732 parking spaces and bus parking.

It is our opinion that a reduced parking setback along Mountain Drive and the 15th Side Road could be considered acceptable in these instances. This is provided that the detailed Site Plan Approval process would consider the streetscapes in this area and ensuring no adverse impacts on servicing and safety (ie. sight-lines). It is our opinion that the location of elements closer to the road could act as traffic calming. Considering the activity in close proximity to the ski facilities this would be beneficial.

Additional Comments

It should be noted that this proposal (lodge and parking lots) will be subject to a further site plan approval that will include various details such as drainage and grading, servicing, landscaping including buffering, vehicular and pedestrian movement, shuttle stop locations and other matters normally undressed under Section 41 of the Planning Act. It has been the position of the Town to utilize the Holding –h symbol in accordance with the Planning Act to require certain subsequent approvals prior to the development of the lands. In this case it would include Site Plan Approval including the execution of a Site Plan Agreement for the lands affected by this Amendment.

In addition to the Public Meeting conducted by the Resort, the Town held the Statutory Public Meeting in accordance with the Planning Act on March 1, 2008.

Comments were received from the County of Grey - Planning and Development Department; Grey Sauble Conservation Authority; Grey Bruce Health Unit; and Niagara Escarpment Commission. These comments are summarized below.

The County of Grey Planning and Development Department indicated no concerns with the application provided positive comments were received from the Transportation and Public Safety Committee. The Grey County Transportation and Public Safety Department did not provide written comments however they were extensively involved with this project through the design of the intersection of Grey Road 19, Mountain Drive and Scenic Caves Road.

The Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) reviewed the application and noted that the following should be completed prior to the approval of the proposed amendment:

- a) A stormwater management and floodplain analysis is completed to the satisfaction of the applicable Conservation Authority.
- b) A geotechnical investigation be completed to assess any potential affects on the karst topography, shallow overburden and subsurface drainage from the development.
- c) That a vegetation retention/ buffering and planting plan be completed for the development.

The proponent has submitted a Stormwater Management Report , which, together with the Preliminary Servicing Plan, has been accepted by the Town's Engineering and Public Works Department and our applicable consultants. A more detailed review will however be conducted under the detailed Site Plan Review process. The GSCA has confirmed that this report addresses their requirements.

The County of Grey Planning and Development Department noted in their comments that they are satisfied that there has been extensive engineering on this project to ensure that there is no adverse and the site is to be full serviced. The Town will rely on the comments from the County as this is a matter of Natural Heritage which is the responsibility of the County under the Provincial Policy. With regard to the landscape comment, this is usually a matter for the detailed Site Plan Review process. We do note however that special attention will be required under this project to provide significant landscaping for buffering from adjacent uses and to buffer the visual impact of the lodge.

A written response was also received that noted concern with the reduction in the minimum side yard setback from a residential zone and concerns with bus idling and parking location. With regard to the residential setback, this was a specifically related to the lodge in proximity to the Weider residence. It will not be providing any relief in the parking lot which was the concern of the author. The Town shares the concerns related to bus idling and it our understanding that the Resort is addressing this matter as well. It will be a matter addressed under the Site Plan Approval process.

Other concerns raised verbally at the public meeting were as follows:

- a) Pedestrian movement
- b) Traffic exiting Claire Glen
- c) Night Skiing on Orchard runs
- d) Lighting of parking lot
- e) Affects on drainage of Prices Subdivision
- f) Affects on two culverts crossing Scenic Cave Road.

With regard to the aforementioned concerns, we note that pedestrian movement from the parking lot to the lodge is a major issue. As indicated, the proponent's traffic

consultant prepared a report that recommended a signalized at-grade crossing closer to the intersection of the 15th Side Road. The County has never formally responded to this submission, however has verbally indicated that they prefer a pedestrian tunnel. Planning Staff are satisfied that an adequate solution is available based on the discussion in order to proceed with the Zoning By-law Amendment and that the details of the pedestrian crossing can be addressed under the detailed Site Plan Approval process to the satisfaction of the County of Grey. With regard to the impacts on traffic on Claire Glen, the Traffic impact study noted some options to address this issue. This includes the implementation of a one way system or a gate controlled system. It would appear that there maybe some merit in the one-way system heading west. The details of this option can be further explored under the Site Plan Approval process.

The proponent indicated that the night lighting of the parking lot would be similar to the treatment of the Mountain Walk Parking lot which is “night-sky” friendly. The Site Plan Agreement will ensure this component of the proposal. The lighting of the hill and other elements of the development of the hill will be subject to a Niagara Escarpment Development Control permit approval process.

Lastly, with respect to the affects on the Prices Subdivision and the impacts of two culverts south on Scenic Caves Road, it was identified that neither this development, nor the development on the hill will adversely impact the current situation. This is a matter that could be looked at as part of a future sewer servicing project by the Town in the subdivision.

Based on the foregoing, we concur with the proponents Planning Consultant that the proposed zoning by-law amendment is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, conforms to the intent and direction of the Town of The Blue Mountains Official Plan and represents good planning. Therefore, Planning Staff would support this application for zoning by-law amendment conditional upon the comments made in this report.

C. The Blue Mountains’ Strategic Plan

The recommendation in this Planning Staff Report PL.08.108 is consistent and supports the following Strategic Plans Goals:

“1. Managing growth to ensure the ongoing health and prosperity of the community”.

D. Environmental Impact

The proposal does not appear to generate any significant environmental impacts that can be regulated by the Town.

E. Budget Impact

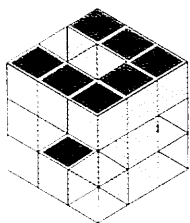
The Budget impacts of the round-a-bout were dealt with under a previous report. There are no anticipated negative budget impacts resulting from this approval.

F. Attachment(s)

1. Master Concept Plan
2. Cross Section
3. BMR Orchard Traffic Addendum

Respectfully submitted,

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June 11, 2008

File No. 105140

Via email (colint@travisinc.ca) & mail

 Travis & Associates Inc.
 304-391 First Street
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Att: Colin Travis, MCIP, RPP

Dear Colin:

**Re: *BMR South Base & Orchard Expansion
 Pedestrian Crossings & Blue Mountain Road Operations***

Further to your request and our meeting of 22 May 2008, we have reviewed the BMR Orchard development plans with respect to the following:

- pedestrian crossings of Scenic Caves Road between the new parking lots and the new Orchard Lodge; and
- operations of Blue Mountain Road between the new Orchard Parking areas (Scenic Caves Road to Claire Glen Road).

PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

As per the most current development plan, there are 2 pedestrian crossings proposed of Scenic Caves Road - the 1st immediately south of the roundabout (which is part of the County's design of the roundabout), and the 2nd approximately 100 metres south of the roundabout, mid-way between the roundabout and Blue Mountain Road. While sidewalks/trails are proposed which will lead to/from the roundabout, it is expected that minimal crossings will occur there - the majority of crossings are expected at the mid-block location as it provides direct access between the new lodge and the parking areas.

Pedestrian Crossing Volumes

The type and location of crossing will be dependent upon the pedestrian crossing volumes, which in turn are dictated by the number of vehicles arriving/departing the Orchard parking areas. The following assumptions have been employed with respect to estimating auto and pedestrian volumes:

- peak hour trip rate of 0.8 trips per parking space, equally split between inbound and outbound travel (ie. 0.4 trips per space in and 0.4 trips per space out) as per *Blue Mountain Resorts South Base & Orchard Expansion Traffic Impact Assessment*¹; and

¹ *Blue Mountain Resorts South Base & Orchard Expansion Traffic Impact Assessment*. Consult Tatham Transportation Consultants, January 2006.



- 3 persons per vehicle as indicated by BMR (as otherwise employed in their parking capacity analyses).

The resulting estimates are provided in Table 1. It is noted that these figures reflect peak hour volumes during peak operating conditions (ie. peak hour on the peak winter Saturdays, which are expected less than 10 times per year). As noted, Parking Lot 1B will generate 543 pedestrian crossings per direction (related to in and out movements) whereas Parking Lot 1C will generate 522 per direction during the peak hour.

	Parking Lot 1B (north)			Parking Lot 1C (south)		
parking spaces	452 spaces			436 spaces		
peak hour vehicle trips	181 in	181 out	362 total	174 in	174 out	348 total
peak hour pedestrian trips	543 in	543 out	1086 total	522 in	522 out	1044 total

Pedestrian volumes have also been estimated in consideration of typical operating conditions, based on information provided by BMR. This includes:

- a turnover of 2 vehicles per space per day;
- 3 persons per vehicle;
- 14 operating hours per day; and
- 20% of daily activity occurs in the peak hour.

	Parking Lot 1B (north)			Parking Lot 1C (south)		
parking spaces	452 spaces			436 spaces		
daily vehicle trips	904 in	904 out	1808 total	872 in	872 out	1744 total
daily person trips	2712 in	2712 out	5424 total	2616 in	2616 out	5232 total
average hour pedestrian trips ¹	194 in	194 out	388 total	187 in	187 out	374 total
peak hour pedestrian trips ²	542 in	542 out	1084 total	523 in	523 out	1046 total

¹ average hour assumed as 7% (1/14) of daily volume

² peak hour assumed as 20% of daily volume

As noted, the results indicated in Table 2 for the peak hour are consistent with those of Table 1.

In consideration of the current Orchard development plan, it is assumed that all pedestrian crossings will occur at the crossing location mid-way between the roundabout

and Blue Mountain Road. Therefore, the total crossing volume is 2130 persons - 1065 per direction (approximately 18 people crossing per minute per direction). For assessment of crossings, it is common to factor the volumes to reflect children, seniors and handicap persons and express the crossing volumes in units of equivalent adult units. This takes into account the different requirements and crossing times for different users (child and physically disabled = 2.0 adult units, senior = 1.5 adult units). Such an adjustment would also apply in consideration of people walking with ski equipment and wearing ski boots, which will likely extend the time required to cross the road. In consideration of this, 25% of the crossing volumes have been factored by 2.0, yielding an equivalent adult unit volume of 2664 (total both directions). This equates to 22 crossings per minute per direction.

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes on Scenic Caves Road have been determined based on our recent study for development in the area. Traffic counts completed on the Family Day long weekend (February 2008) indicate a peak volume of 477 vehicles (total both directions). To project future volumes, additional traffic related to the new Orchard parking areas (620 vehicles) and overall growth in the area has been considered, which yields a 2018 volume projection of 1280 vehicles. This is considered conservative in that some BMR patrons may already be using a portion of the Orchard parking area and thus would be reflected in the existing traffic count (ie. the associated traffic volumes are then double counted).

Crossing Control Measures

Based on warrants as per the *Transportation Association of Canada Pedestrian Crossing Control Manual* and considering the vehicle volumes on Scenic Caves Road and pedestrian crossing volumes, an uncontrolled crossing would not be sufficient. The applicable crossing controls would be signalized pedestrian crossing or grade separated crossing.

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) also provides warrants for signals in response to pedestrian volumes, based on the maximum 8 hour volumes of the day. While we do not have 8-hour projections, the peak hour volumes are such that signals would otherwise likely be warranted.

In consideration of the above, the minimum control required is a signalized crossing of Scenic Caves Road. With signal control however, there is the potential that vehicles queued at the signal would interfere with the operations of the roundabout (ie. SB traffic queues on Scenic Caves Road would extend from the pedestrian signal to the roundabout). Based on simple traffic signal operations (assuming a 60 second cycle with 40 seconds for Scenic Caves Road traffic and 20 seconds for pedestrian volumes), the 95th percentile queue for southbound traffic would be in the order of 70 metres. The distance from the crossing to the roundabout is approximately 100 metres and thus the queue could be accommodated. As per the pedestrian volumes, 22 crossings per hour per direction are expected (based on equivalent adult units). With the signal timings employed, these 22 crossings would be accommodated within the 20 second pedestrian times recognizing that pedestrians do not cross in single file, but rather in groups. On

average, pedestrian walking speed is 1 metre per second, and thus it would take in the order of 8 to 10 seconds to cross Scenic Caves Road.

The signal could also be located further to the south, at the intersection of Blue Mountain Road with Scenic Caves Road. This location would increase the distance between the signal and the roundabout to approximately 200 metres, thus providing increased queue storage lengths. The signal at this location would also serve both pedestrian and traffic volumes (those to/from the parking areas would have signal control for entering/exiting). However, this location would result in more circuitous walking/crossing routes for the pedestrians oriented to/from Parking Lot 1B (the north lot) in that the connectivity to the Orchard Lodge is not as direct (pedestrians would be directed south to cross the road and then would return north to the lodge, and vice versa). This will increase their walk by approximately 150 metres on average. While this distance is not considered excessive given parking arrangements at other locations within BMR, it is recognized that pedestrians by nature will seek out the shortest path. Sufficient pedestrian control measures (ie. railings or landscaping) would therefore be necessary to effectively direct pedestrians to the crossing location (regardless of location so as to avoid multiple, uncontrolled crossings).

Recommendation

Given the projected pedestrian and traffic volumes, a signalized crossing of Scenic Caves Road is recommended to serve the Orchard Lodge and adjacent parking areas. The currently proposed crossing location (opposite the Orchard Lodge) is considered appropriate in context of the level of service provided to pedestrians, the direct connectivity between the lodge and the parking areas and the expected traffic operations. Should traffic operations and/or crossing volumes exceed the projections noted and traffic queues become an issue, the signal could be relocated to Blue Mountain Road, thereby increasing the separation distance between it and the roundabout. Beyond this, additional measures could also be considered as necessary (ie. police assisted crossings, multiple crossing locations, grade separated crossing, etc.)

It is recognized that the volumes noted represent peak winter activities with 100% occupancy of both parking areas and conservative estimates of Scenic Caves Road traffic. During the non-winter months, both pedestrian and traffic volumes are expected to be less and thus may not warrant the same degree of pedestrian crossing measure.

Similarly, prior to build-out of the lodge and development/utilization of the parking areas, a signalized crossing is not required. Signalization should be considered in conjunction with build-out of the Orchard Lodge and the increased utilization of the noted parking areas.

OPERATIONS OF BLUE MOUNTAIN ROAD

Blue Mountain Road will provide access to the parking lots and will also provide a connection to the abutting residential development via Claire Glen Road. While it was initially proposed to close Blue Mountain Road to through traffic (to restrict ski hill traffic from accessing the local road system and thus directing them to Grey Road 19 via Mountain Drive), it is understood that the local residents are not in favour of this. They

would like access to remain open such that they can also access Grey Road 19 and the mountain via Mountain Drive. The closure of Blue Mountain Road would require residents to access Grey Road 19 from Claire Glen Road. The associated left turn movement will become more difficult and will experience higher delays as volumes on Grey Road 19 increase.

The operation of Blue Mountain Road is to consider the following:

- 2-way operations between Scenic Caves Road and the access points to the parking lots (both Lots 1B and 1C);
- access from the abutting residential areas to Scenic Caves Road (reverse access is not required);
- emergency access maintained at all times; and
- the desire to minimize/limit/restrict unnecessary ski traffic on Blue Mountain Road east of the parking lot access points.

Recommendation

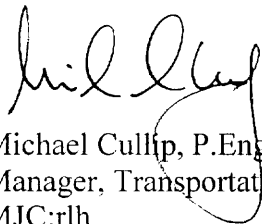
There are no established guidelines or warrants that would address this situation. However, based on the above, we recommend that the portion of Blue Mountain Road east of the parking lot access be restricted to one-way, westbound traffic only (ie. patrons exiting the parking lots must proceed westbound on Blue Mountain Road). This would require appropriate signage and delineation similar to that which is employed on the loop road at the Village. In consideration of non-winter volumes, it is likely that this restriction would only be necessary during the winter months.

As an alternative, the easterly section of Blue Mountain Road could be gate controlled, with local residents being provided with a means to open/close the gate by remote control (ie. similar to gate controlled parking). This would entail additional technologies, implementation and maintenance costs.

Should you have any comments or questions on the above, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Yours truly

C.C. TATHAM & ASSOCIATES LTD.



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