

**Shovel-ready  
a selection of trail ideas,  
from a walking point of view**



April 14, 2019



## What are shovel-ready projects?

The other day I was told that there is a national call for shovel-ready trail projects. I'm not sure if this is a city, or non-profit or what the actual program is looking for. I heard from a friend who in the heady time of "quick, we need a shovel-ready project", trail ideas that were thought worthy of pursuing are easily forgotten. This document is a compilation of trail ideas that will benefit planners and groups with trail building skills looking to contribute to the larger community of trail users.

Signature new trails and connector trails can breathe new life into existing trails. But what about community-desired, pre-shovel-ready projects: not-already-designed, -costed, -permitted, -construction-team-ready-to-go ideas? For instance, trail maintenance is critical for a good trail. How do we fix trails that have problems, ensure city trails are truly shared and safe? How do we introduce other trail visions?

As walkers, our needs are sometimes different than those of biking folk. We like short cuts, we try to take time to look around, we stop and chat, rest on hills and generally go slower than bikes. We can't cover as much ground in the same time as bikes. So designing trails with only mountain biking flow trails in mind can miss opportunities to consult with the other trail user needs.

With whitehorseWalks.com, I try to encourage more people to walk by identifying 'destination' walks, neighbourhood walks and loop walking trails. I also advocate for proper trail signage, more accessible and safe trails, particularly through switchbacks or 'easier routes', connectors and trail repair. I also encourage love of walking for all ages. A current project is identifying short destination loops. Some of them are in this document. see [http://whitehorsewalks.com/\\_loops/pdfs/ShortWalkingLoops.pdf](http://whitehorsewalks.com/_loops/pdfs/ShortWalkingLoops.pdf)

For some of us the reality is we're seniors, we're aging. Our ElderActive walking group tries to be inclusive — we welcome whoever comes. One thing is that most city trails are not well marked. We need to be able to waymark some trails and loops, especially in places such as behind the hospital where there is a maze of trails.

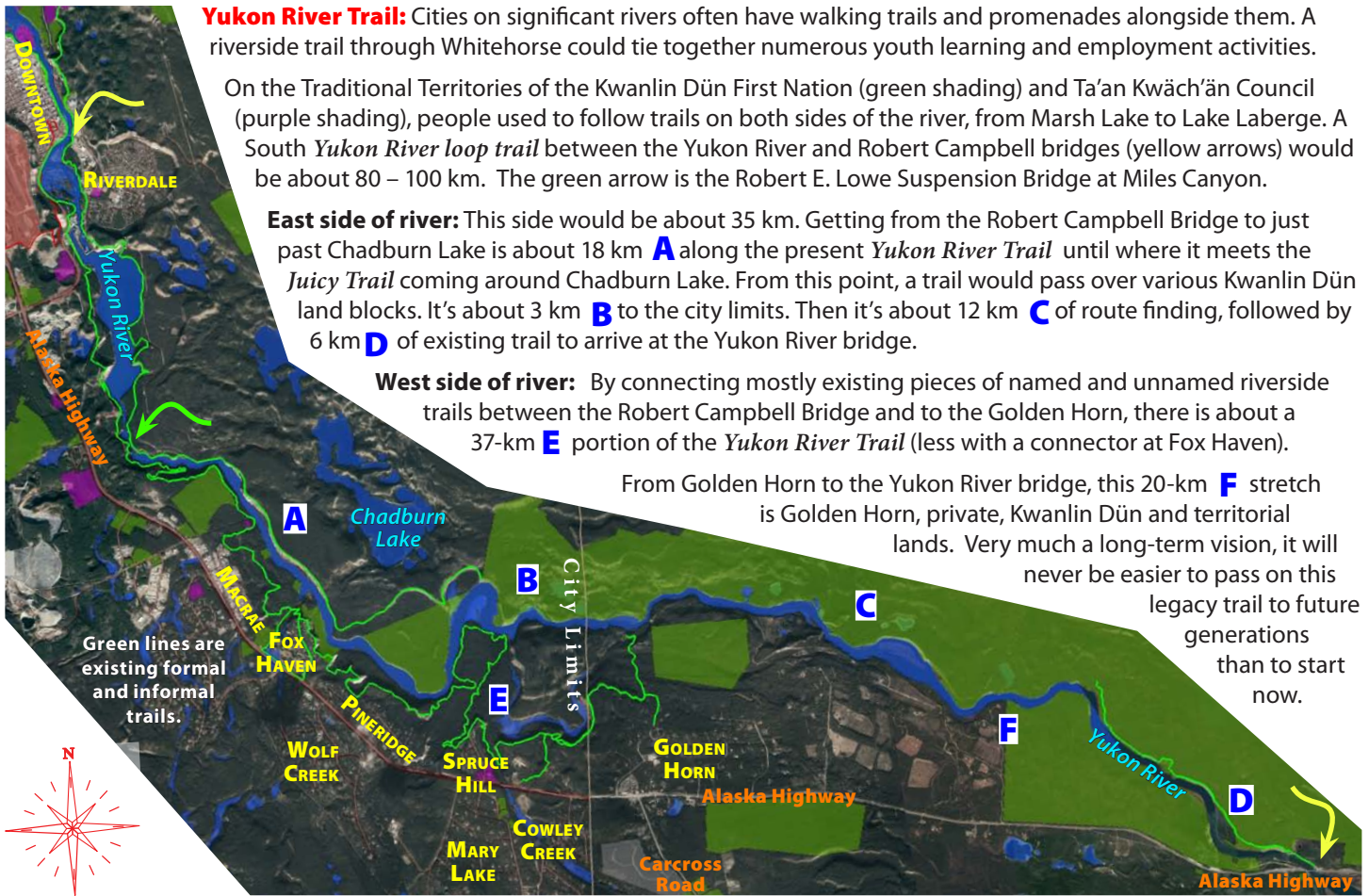
Note that, as we age, while we can choose routes and flag problems, actual trail building is beyond a number of us. How can we get a voice in trail work? We'd like to see some of the enclosed ideas come to fruition. Perhaps we can bring letters of support, ideas for funding and suggestions about making trail use better for all. We know trail workers are not an off-the-shelf commodity!

Looking at these ideas for trail improvements, I'm struck by how many are really of benefit to a broad range of people. I think that there are many bike riders who'd be happy to ride up a switchback on a steep hill, or to ride down a switchback at a point on a trail that is otherwise well beyond their safe skill range.

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**Yukon River Trail:** Cities on significant rivers often have walking trails and promenades alongside them. A riverside trail through Whitehorse could tie together numerous youth learning and employment activities.

On the Traditional Territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation (green shading) and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council (purple shading), people used to follow trails on both sides of the river, from Marsh Lake to Lake Laberge. A South *Yukon River loop trail* between the Yukon River and Robert Campbell bridges (yellow arrows) would be about 80 – 100 km. The green arrow is the Robert E. Lowe Suspension Bridge at Miles Canyon.

**East side of river:** This side would be about 35 km. Getting from the Robert Campbell Bridge to just past Chadburn Lake is about 18 km **A** along the present *Yukon River Trail* until where it meets the *Juicy Trail* coming around Chadburn Lake. From this point, a trail would pass over various Kwanlin Dün land blocks. It's about 3 km **B** to the city limits. Then it's about 12 km **C** of route finding, followed by 6 km **D** of existing trail to arrive at the Yukon River bridge.

**West side of river:** By connecting mostly existing pieces of named and unnamed riverside trails between the Robert Campbell Bridge and to the Golden Horn, there is about a 37-km **E** portion of the *Yukon River Trail* (less with a connector at Fox Haven).

From Golden Horn to the Yukon River bridge, this 20-km **F** stretch is Golden Horn, private, Kwanlin Dün and territorial lands. Very much a long-term vision, it will never be easier to pass on this legacy trail to future generations than to start now.

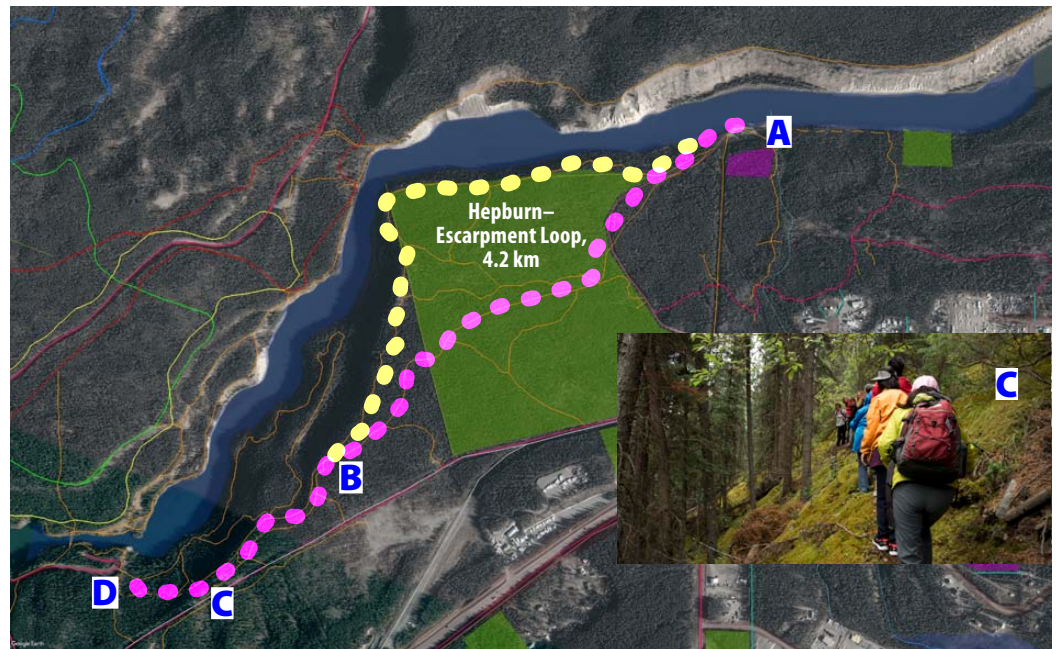
**Hepburn Tramway:** Parts of the path of this old (1898) tramway is still easily seen. Today, as when it was built, the *Hepburn Tramway* can solve problems. Then it was bypassing rapids and a wild canyon; today, it's a low hanging fruit on connecting neighbourhoods and creating a *Yukon River Trail*. An important first step is brushing and re-benching a couple of sections.

**A** The head of the 1898 *Hepburn Tramway* is at the foot of today's American Laundry Road. Some brushing and thought of presentation will entice people to do this section of trail.

At **B** the trail reaches the top of the escarpment. Follow the tramway downhill. Turning right takes you along a trail (yellow dots) all the way back to the start. This trail needs some brushing, especially as it comes out at **A**.

Turning at **B** makes a nice 4.2-km loop looking over the Canyon, Canyon City and the river. It's a fairly gradual loop.

At **C** the trail gets very narrow (photo) and eventually disappears for a bit. Re-benching and creating a new trail base to connect with existing section near **D** is needed. The tramway comes out just above the seasonal outhouses. A more inviting connection is needed. The tramway trail should be restored to keep the original grade so that most people can walk it— the *Hepburn Tramway* was designed for a horse to pull a cart loaded with supplies.

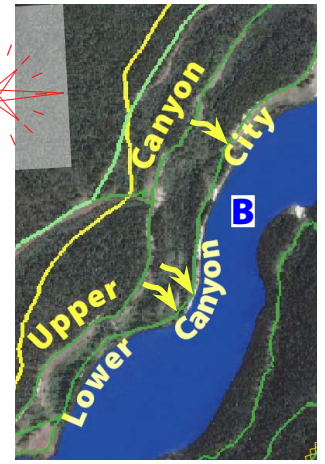
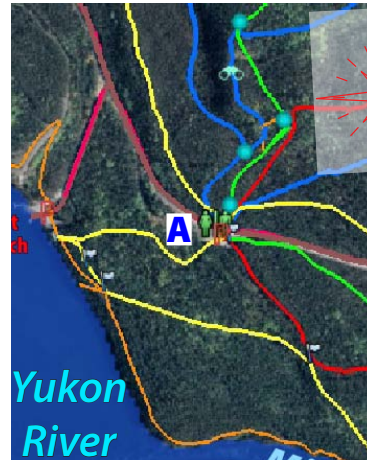


**Miles Canyon:** The destination tourism staff routinely praise to visitors. The area needs help. These are just a few observations...



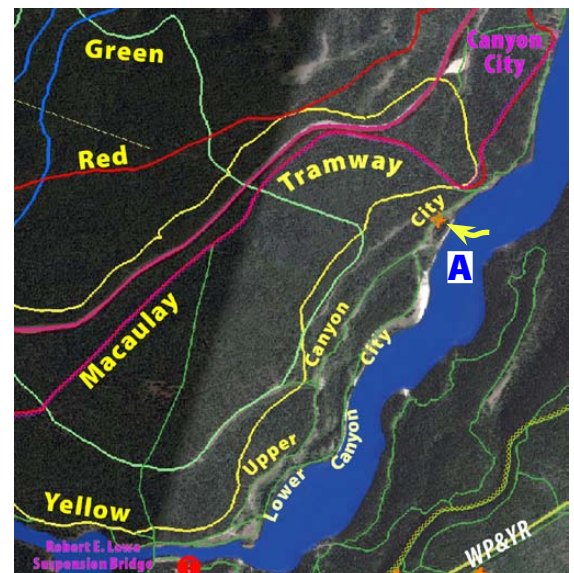
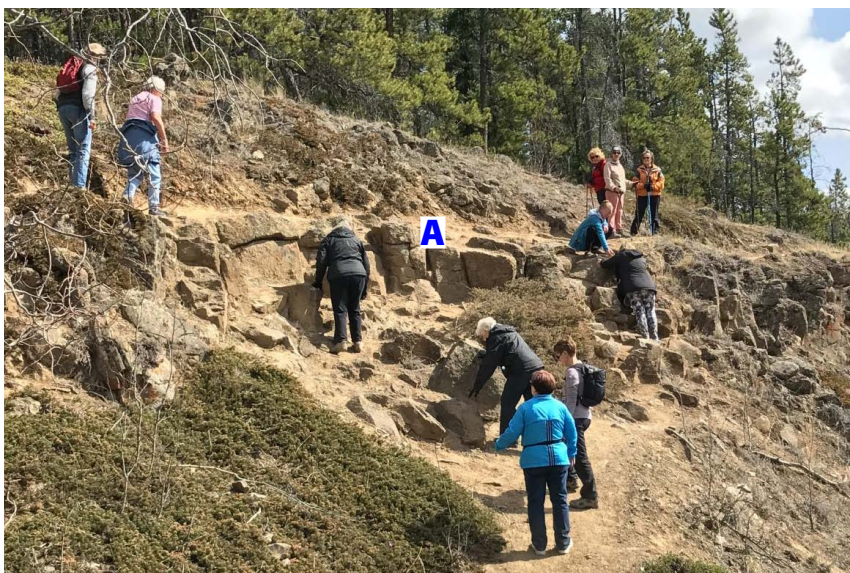
**Yellow North by Chadburn ski trails parking lot:**

From the parking lot **A** follow the *Chadburn Yellow Trail* northwest towards the river and you're immediately faced with a nasty descent. This would be easy to fix with a switchback and would improve things for the trail network here. (A biker also agreed that this is treacherous for them.)



**Lower Canyon City trail:** The *Lower Canyon City* trail is very nice as it makes its way along the edge of the river.

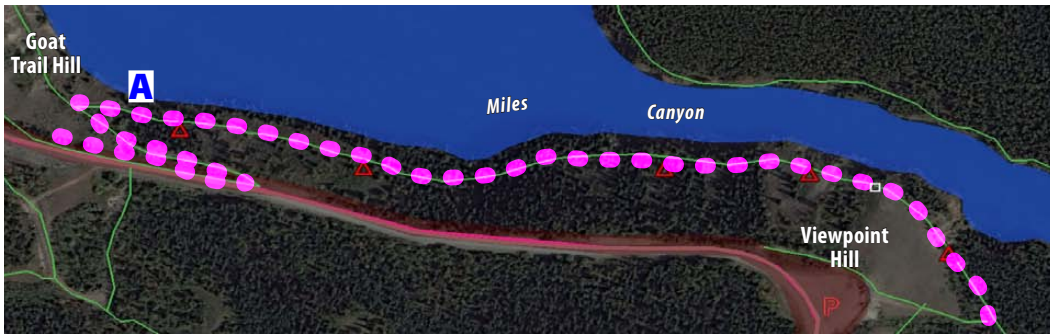
However, there are spots **B** where the trail is crumbling off the edge (yellow arrows). The easiest repair would be to go around these spots, to move back into the forest, but still keeping the trail near the edge. The longer the trail continues to be used as is, the more damage will happen. This should be a generally usable trail not requiring special warning signs.



**Rock scramble on Upper Canyon City Trail:** Our ElderActive walking group was 16 hikers one day, all ages with at least a couple over 80, (a very inspiring group.) When we arrived at the rock face **A** (photo) many had already scrambled up. The rest said that they'd scramble up too rather than go back. I can't help but think about others (tourists, seniors, families with kids, unfit adults, ...) who are faced with this scramble! There could easily be a nice short loop trail here.

By only walking the *Yellow* and *Red* trails to avoid the scramble, most of the walk to Canyon City wouldn't be by the water — and our group wants more stimulating hikes. Having often walked trails in Edmonton, I admire their use of wooden staircases to access the ravines. This seems a possible solution here. There's space at the side of this rock face where a small staircase would fit.

Long time trail users in the walking group believe that this spot seems worse than ever. The trail description on the trailhead kiosk showed for *Upper Canyon City* "a small cliff section that requires an easy scramble." HA! This shows the speed that deterioration is happening. Looking at the geology here, it looks like this rock exposure will only continue to get worse with use.



**Hepburn Tramway from Miles Canyon to the Goat Trail:** Part of the annual *Yukon River Trail Marathon* route, this section of the *Hepburn Tramway* could change from 'caution, loose rock' on current signage to **recommended!**

While this section of tramway has a delightful feel to it, there are spots where trail maintenance could stop erosion and trail fall-away. Presently it discourages people wanting to walk alongside the river. An upgraded trail will allow more walks in the area, such as over to Ear Lake.

There are places where, while the original tramway is wide, trees have grown up in the tramway bed and people have walked around them on the outside edge. Time and use have eroded the edges and will one day require more major repairs, or an accidental slip down the steep slope to the canyon below. A wider bridge beam and a tighter weave of side ropes would make the bridge along here a nicer experience, especially for those who have a fear of heights and are relying on walking poles—as some of our group do.

**A** This switchback needs help where it turns uphill to the road. A slip seems a needless risk to those coming down, and is a place where some of my group members might not like the precarious feeling here.



**Schwatka Lake promenade:** A *Yukon River Trail* will require a way from the old *Goat Trail* (actually the *Hepburn Tramway*), through the woods and then along the Miles Canyon Road.

There are a few steps to make this to happen. One is to integrate a way of walking by the river at Goat Trail Hill **A**.

Second would be to try to use the section of existing *Hepburn Tramway* to go through this area **B**. The Schwatka Lake Area Plan is currently looking at boat docks, float plane and other lease arrangements and day use areas along this stretch of river in here.

Third would be to have a 1.5 km promenade, dotted yellow line, along the shore **C**. This could start life as a crushed gravel path.

What's really needed is a vision. There are not many cities that are so outdoor recreation orientated, so tourism focussed, with a section of river/lake shore so close to downtown, that would dedicate a waterfront opportunity to vehicles. We need to take back our walking rights here! The *Hepburn Tramway* offers a unifying core to this concept.



**Dam bypass route:** Presently, marathon runners on the *Yukon River Trail Marathon* leave the campground and go on the Miles Canyon Road alongside Yukon Energy's power canal, then turn off the road and onto the start of trail opposite the float planes. People walking the *Yukon River Loop Trail* also find themselves in the ditch and on the road. This section parallels the *Hepburn Tramway* (today buried under the dam structure) as it neared the terminus in Robert Service Campground.

Leaving Robert Service Campground **A** and going along Robert Seervice Way in the ditch **B** to get to Schwatka Lake needs to be much nicer, less bleak and industrial. Kid-bicycle friendly, tourist attracting, runner friendly should be some of the focus.

An easy safer route past the power canal is a 7-km connector (pink + yellow dotted lines.) Enter the woods **C** on a little trail (pink dots) opposite the LNG plant. At **D** a .5-km trail, (yellow dots,) would need to be cut to connect with the existing marathon route at **E**. The ground is generally level through open forest and extending the initial trail would not be difficult. It could even use the 1899 telegraph route.

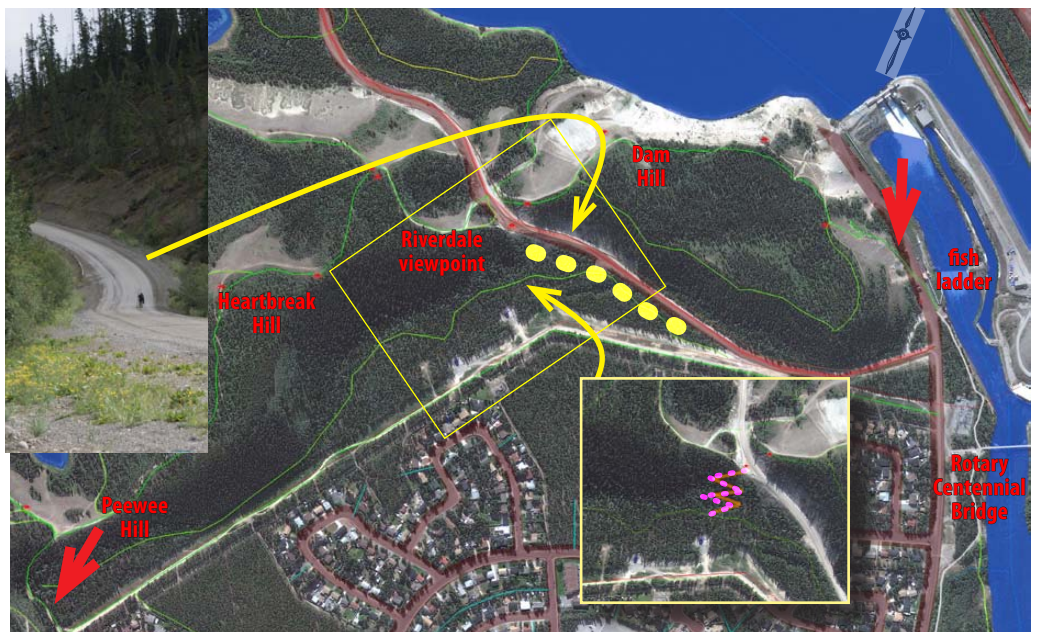
A pedestrian crossing **F** from the Airport area should be considered even if it's just a pedestrail crossing sign..

**Chadburn Lake Road bypass:**

How often do people walk along the Riverdale powerline, up Peewee Hill, up Heartbreak Hill and down to the Chadburn Lake Road and just couldn't face walking up the Dam Hill, so they walked down the side of Chadburn Lake Road?

Hiking in the area southeast of Riverdale is great; getting access to the area by trail isn't easy; the two red arrows show Peewee Hill and the Dam Hill's Yukon Energy *Viewpoint Hill Trail* by the Fish Ladder.

One can also use the Chadburn Lake Road. The dotted yellow line shows a walk of about 700 metres along a twisty narrow road. Vehicles go fast, and there's a very blind hill at the top (at the Riverdale viewpoint.)



The area needs a connection from this Riverdale viewpoint to the powerline area below. One method would be to build a staircase similar to the Black Street Stairs. This has proved very popular with fitness buffs. Another solution (inset map) is to build a switchback descent trail. This was done quite successfully for the *Copper Ridge Connector Trail*. It provides a gentler ascent/descent than stairs and would be more popular with bicyclists. Making it an all-season solution so that it can be used in the winter is important.

**Two Towers loop trail:** To me this one of Whitehorse's finest short loop hikes! You quickly get a sense of the lakes and south slopes that abound in the Chadden Lake–Hidden Lakes area of town. You actually walk downhill to get on top of the ridge.

This 3.2-km hike, a bit over an hour for good walkers, is likely the easiest hike where you can bring a visitor to show why we love living in Whitehorse. To top it off, you can drive here and easily park at the trailhead (yellow arrow). But, there are 3 spots that cause havoc for walkers.

**A** This rutting slippery section of *El Camino* continues to get more eroded as bikes use it, especially as it's only a one-way bike trail. Where *El Camino* comes down the steep part, with a jump in the middle of the trail, there's ample room to put a set of 3 small 'easier route' switchbacks. Less fearless mountain bikers will also be happy and *El Camino* can become a 2-way trail.

**B** This needs a small trail rerouting.

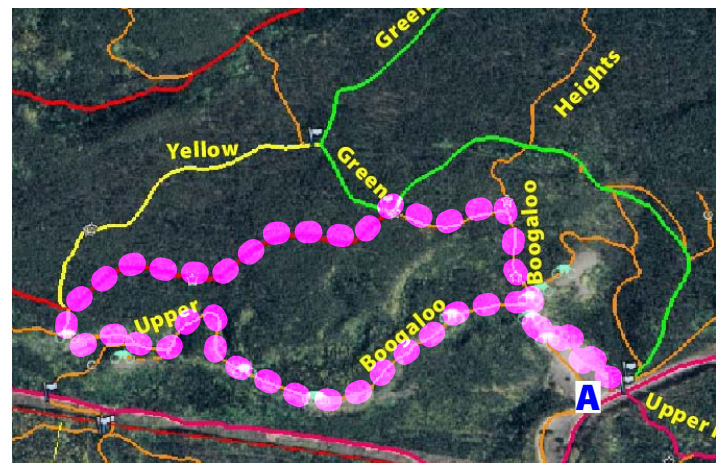
Walkers love ridge trails with vast panoramas. The bike section of *My Trail* goes through a small valley behind the main view hill. However, it completely bypasses the most scenic section of this walking loop. An earlier version of trail following the walking route was abandoned at the marked spot **C**. We bushwhack on the slope through the woods but this does a disservice to this great hike!

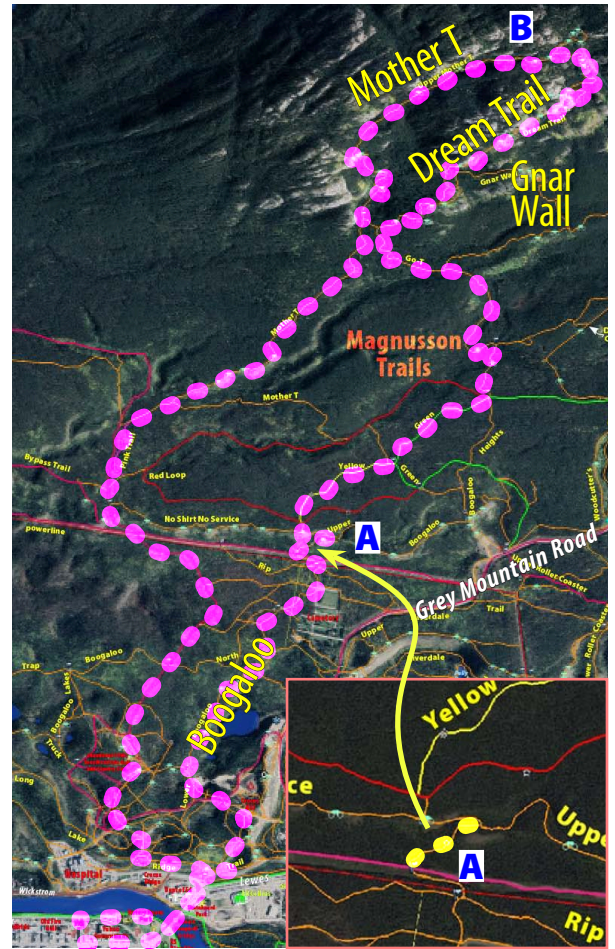


**Magnusson Trailhead connector:** A key component in the ever-growing use of the Hospital–Magnusson–Grey Mountain north trail area is this central trailhead parking lot **A**. However, it's too small for the traffic some days and as the new *Dream Trail* becomes more popular, hikers and bikers will flock here, many of course, by driving!

The big hill at the parking lot presents a slippery, rocky hillside for people ascending and descending. There's ample room for an inviting trail along the side of this hill. Area trails, especially over to *No Shirt*, would be more accessible from the trailhead.

The pink dotted line shows the 2.9-km *Looking over the cemetery loop*, one of the local short scenic walks, which would be much nicer with a safer way to get up, and down, the hill.





**'Easier route' from RIP going up Upper Boogaloo:** This steep narrow section (yellow dots) **A** is great for mountain bike downhill — there's even a jump in the middle of the trail. It's mapped as one-way travel for bikes. Yet, it's also used by walkers to get between *RIP* and *No Shirt No Service* and *Upper Boogaloo* and the other Magnusson trails. A switchback or some better way trail users can safely come through here will benefit all trail users, especially mountain bikers who wish to go uphill.

It's important to look at the big picture. Loop **B**, pink dots, is 18.9 km from the VRC. The obvious trail route up towards the *Dream Trail*, *Mother T* and *Gnar Wall* will come through this spot on the ridge.

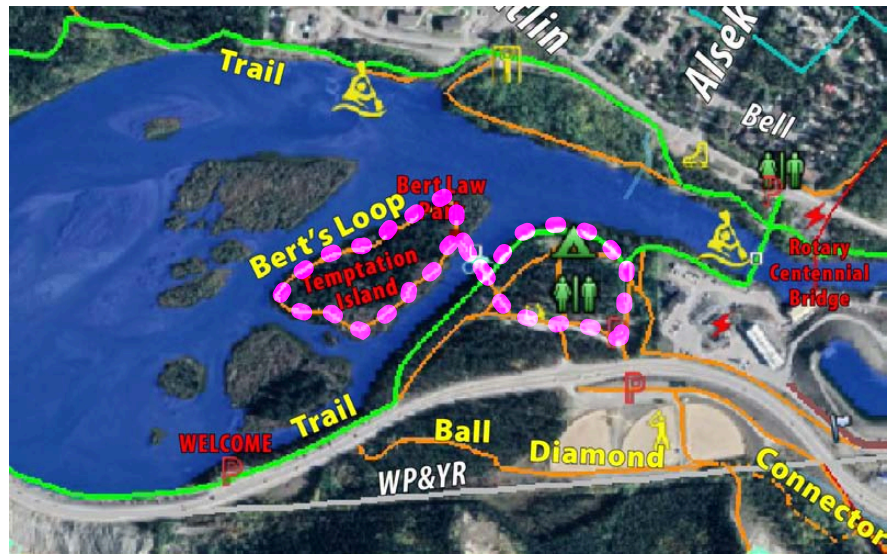
**Hospital meditative loop:** Visitors to the hospital often end up needing a break, getting fresh air, having a time to reflect. This 1.7-km trail could be the solution. Short, fairly gradual, river and mountain views, peaceful south slopes, this has them all. This route can easily be walked in about 45 minutes.

Needs a small bit of trail maintenance **A**, brushing part of the old trail **B**, perhaps a bench at **C** — but most importantly, some clear wayfinding signage.

As well as being accessible to the hospital and to the Crocus Ridge hospital residence, this loop can be easily accessed from the switchback **D** at the traffic lights on Lewes and parking can happen at the skateboard park **E**.



**Bert's Loop:** Truly a wonderful oasis, the city has recently taken over Robert Service Campground. Before it becomes too popular with any new area activities, the riverine Bert Law Park needs some attention, it needs a vision.



The 700-m perimeter trail could be surfaced with some more crushed gravel to give it a more all-season base. A better spacing of more park benches will make this an ideal short walk for those who can only go so far before a rest, or those such as nursing mothers who want a little peaceful time in nature.

There are a few interior trails that can allow even shorter loops through a quiet bit of forest.

The dotted pink trail shown is about 1.4 km. The slope from the *Millennium Trail* down to the old iron bridge tends to be quite icy for a long time in spring and if this could be addressed, this loop could be a valuable rehabilitative walk.



**Airport Toe Trail:** The *Airport Perimeter Trail* on the escarpment above Downtown really benefitted from the Black Street stairs. To complement this, we need a route off the south end of the escarpment. The 1.3-km pink dotted line mostly uses existing trails.

From the ball diamonds **A**, one can connect to the *Millennium Trail*, the *Rotary Centennial Bridge* and the Miles Canyon Road.

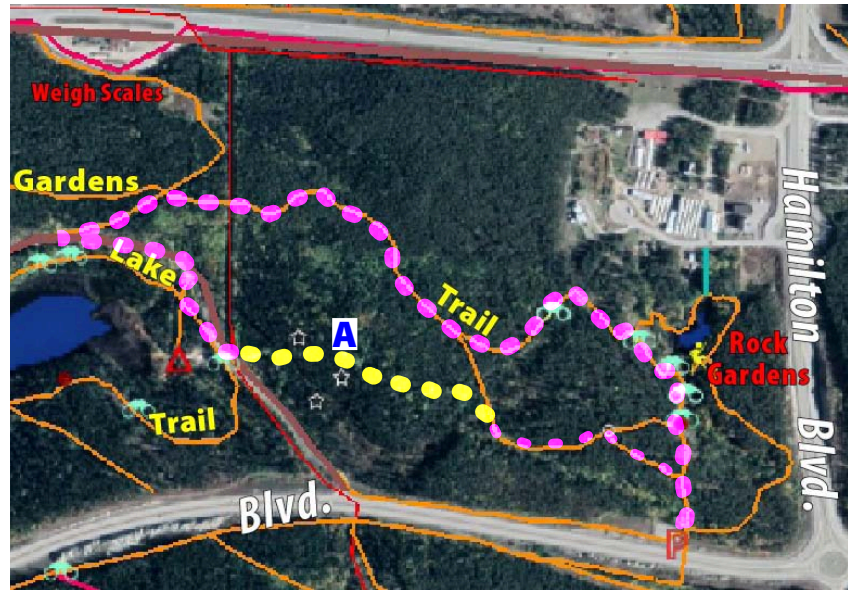
To get down from the escarpment, follow the *Toe Trail B* along the high ridge descending towards the snow dump area. This esker is fragile; continuing vehicle use will cause it to fail. The last part of this ridge, a sandy slope, needs a staircase, or a switchback (at the yellow arrow).

A little clearing of the chopped willows under the powerline, and formalizing the path **C** through the woods, will make this route (pink dotted line) popular. Going through the woods avoids having to go alongside the road.



**D** The *Ball Diamond Connector Trail* goes back into the woods after the ball diamonds, following the easy path through open forest. It needs a bit of trail definition work.

**E** Carefully cross over Robert Service Way to the *Millennium Trail*. As always for pedestrians, crossing would be safer if there was a pedestrian crossing warning sign.



**Rock Gardens to Ice Lake connector:** We've seen in this neighbourhood that as trails become more known and new trails are added, more people are out for longer walks and bike rides. This is a community health success story.

The pink dotted line shows another of the proposed short interesting loops walks around town. This 2.6-km loop has views of the rock climbing cliffs, a couple of small lakes, fun forest trails and most importantly, a nice new parking lot!

To make the loop possible, a .42-km connector trail **A**, yellow dotted line, is needed between the trails at the Rock Gardens and the *Ice Lake Trail*.

**Ingram crossing:** The Arkell Wetlands is a glacial feature that bounds the McIntyre, Ingram, Logan Copper Ridge and Lobird subdivisions. Currently, the shortest loop around the wetlands is 9-km between McIntyre and Copper Ridge.

A wetland crossing **A** from Ingram to Harvey's Hut (yellow arrow) will encourage more neighbourhood use of the trails between the Arkell Wetlands and McIntyre Creek. It also allows all-season access to McIntyre Creek.

The crossing will create a 4-km loop at the McIntyre – Ingram north end and a 6.7-km loop at the Logan Copper Ridge south end. Residents challenged by short recreation times — after school, after supper, early morning — could be encouraged to get outside and hike and bike. Staying below the *Porcupine Ridge* trail presents an opportunity for those who have challenges with the larger hills. Interpretation of the wetlands is another possibility.

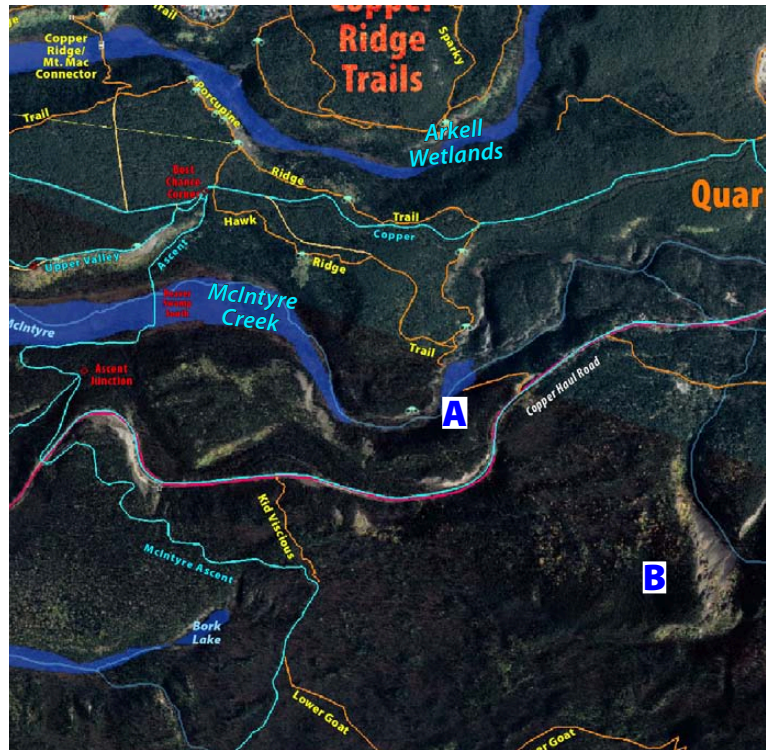
The approximately 1-km connector will need trail, boardwalks, and a switchback below Harvey's Hut.





**Hawk Ridge Crossing:** Behind the Copper Ridge subdivision are two glacial features: Arkell Wetlands and McIntyre Creek. A few years back the city orchestrated the great *Copper Ridge/Mount Mac Connector* at North Star Road. Trail use across the Arkell Wetlands has increased.

What's missing is an all-season crossing of McIntyre Creek. A crossing would give above-the-airport residents access to Mount McIntyre. Contagious Mountain Bike Club has been the city's goto group in spearheading new trails up on the mountain, and they are proposing to build a crossing **A** of McIntyre Creek off the *Hawk Ridge Trail*. It will be a great asset for hikers, runners as well as bikers and snowbikers.



It should be built for multi-use, with 'easier routes' if needed, allowing bi-directional biking. We need to ensure that winter use is not restricted for walking.

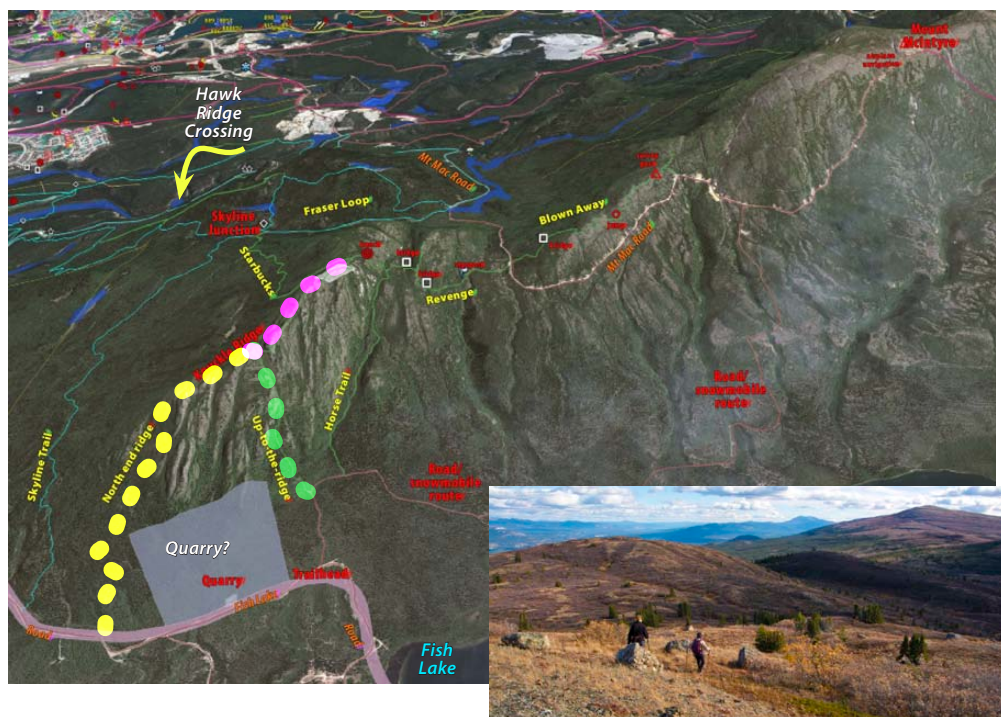
There needs to be a plan to go higher up Mount McIntyre to the *Knuckle Ridge Trail*, bypassing ski trail conflicts. The Copper Belt story of the old mine, cabins and the road here could be a topic for interpretation. A trail by the geologic fault **B** would be an interesting addition. This crossing would give the *Reckless Raven Ultra Race* more opportunity to find harder sections to run!

**Knuckle Ridge Loop:** Knuckle Ridge is on the north end of Mount McIntyre. Hiking is spectacular, and not hard.

Alpine country surrounds Whitehorse, but accessing it is generally by poor roads. The Fish Lake Road goes up high, and it's well maintained, year round. The *Up-to-the-ridge* trail (green dots) is a 45-minute steep hike on a mostly established 0.9-km trail and is part of the *Reckless Raven Ultra Race*.

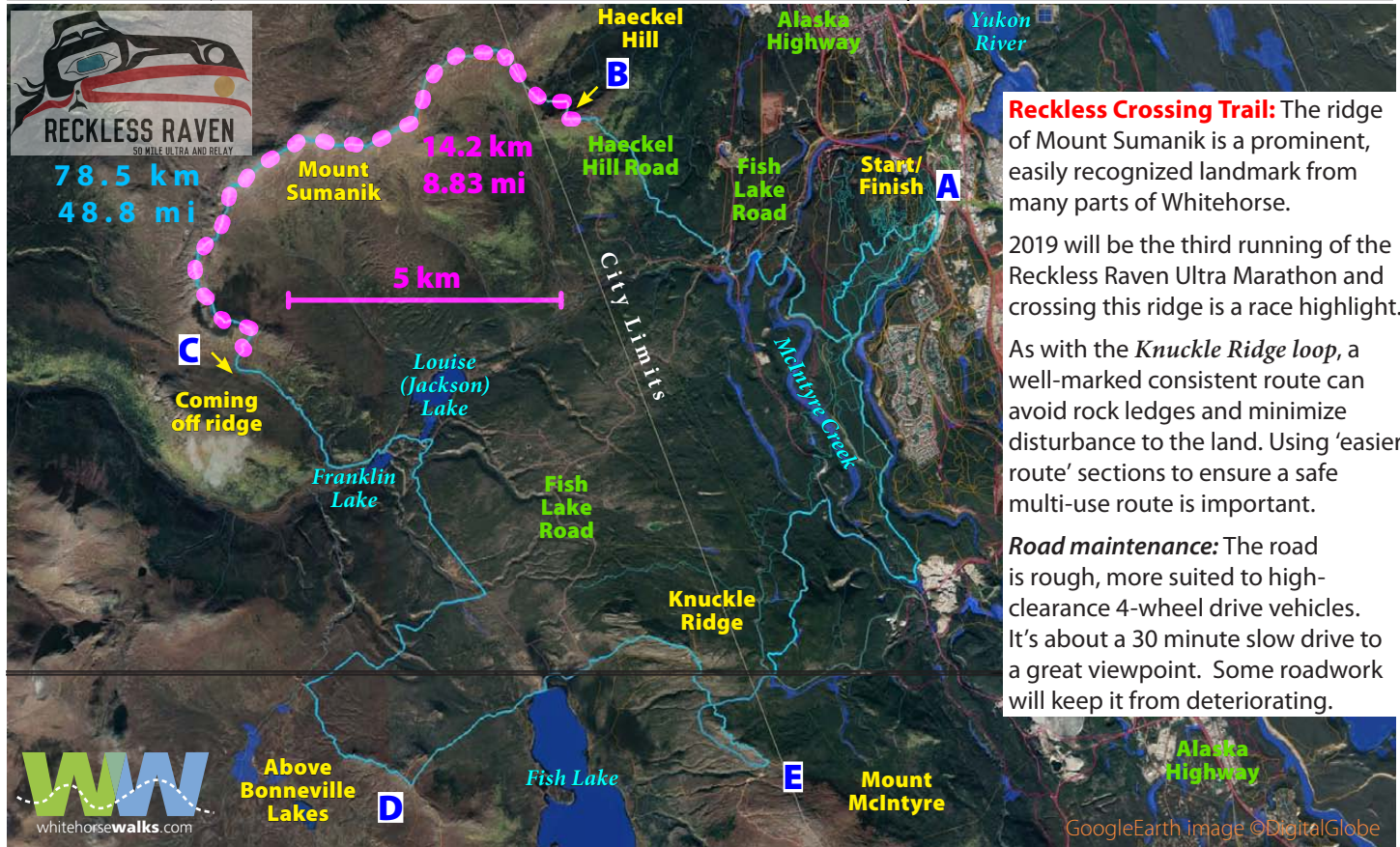
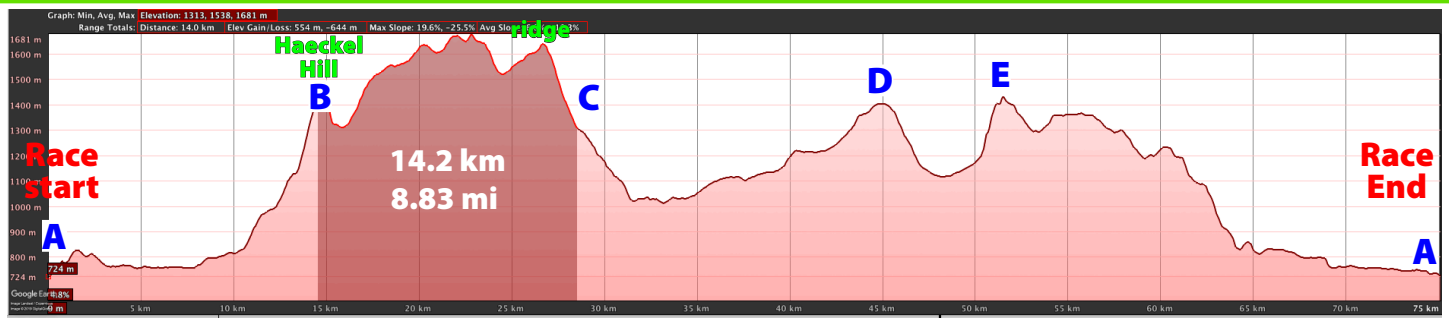
The 1.7 km *Horse Trail* along a small valley also gives very easy connection with the ridge; however, it can be wet and brushy. An alternate route along a side ridge looks possible and would give views over the lake.

A switchback (yellow dots) up the north end of the ridge would allow an all season, alpine delight loop, a route that would avoid ski trails. It would connect using the *Starbuck's Revenge Trail* built by Contagious Mountain Bike Club's trail and would be popular for hiking, snowshoeing and snowbiking. This would be used by many levels of hikers and seniors! Some mountain bikers would use this to avoid a long bike ride, or vehicle shuttle up the mountain from the quarries at MacLean Lake, on the Mount McIntyre Road.



A well-marked route would minimize disturbance and avoid rock ledges. It would especially help in winter when snow can easily cover a path. A mix of snowbikers, snowshoers and hikers would keep the route usable, even in winter. A trail connection along the base of the mountain between the *Up-to-the-ridge* trail and the north end switchback could mostly bypass using the road.

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**Reckless Crossing Trail:** The ridge of Mount Sumanik is a prominent, easily recognized landmark from many parts of Whitehorse.

2019 will be the third running of the Reckless Raven Ultra Marathon and crossing this ridge is a race highlight.

As with the *Knuckle Ridge* loop, a well-marked consistent route can avoid rock ledges and minimize disturbance to the land. Using 'easier route' sections to ensure a safe multi-use route is important.

**Road maintenance:** The road is rough, more suited to high-clearance 4-wheel drive vehicles. It's about a 30 minute slow drive to a great viewpoint. Some roadwork will keep it from deteriorating.

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