

Vegetation Removal and Compensation Program

February 2020

Info Sheet:

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Metrolinx understands that trees and vegetation are valuable contributors to healthy communities, providing important ecological, social, and economic services. The GO Expansion program will require removal of trees and vegetation, and this Info Sheet describes:

- Why is vegetation removal required?
- When will vegetation removals occur?
- How will Metrolinx manage vegetation along the electrified corridor after the removals?
- How will Metrolinx implement restoration?
- How will Metrolinx compensate for tree removals?
- What does it mean for my tree?
- Where can I find more information?

Why is vegetation removal required?

Vegetation removal is a GO Expansion program requirement. It ensures safe delivery and operation of the new infrastructure required to support electrification and increase in service level. A 7-metre Vegetation Clearing Zone, identified as part of the GO Rail Network Electrification 2017 Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP), will be established to:

- Protect electrification infrastructure;
- Increase operational reliability and minimize safety concerns associated with the risk of tree limbs falling onto overhead wires; and
- Accommodate worker and operational safety through the preservation of sightlines.

Additional tree removals may also be required when constructing new tracks, new layover facilities, and other infrastructure.

For more information about Metrolinx's approach to construction management, please refer to Info Sheets 5 on grade separations and 6 on best practices in construction management.



Sustainability is important

Metrolinx has a *Sustainability Strategy*, and one of its goals is to consider the impact of infrastructure and services on ecosystems and ecosystem services and make best efforts to manage, preserve or protect them. To meet this goal, Metrolinx is committed to:

- Minimizing the impact of new and existing infrastructure on ecosystems and look for ways to enhance the health of ecosystems (i.e., species, habitat, biodiversity);
- Integrating requirements into Metrolinx procurement practices to manage and mitigate impacts of new and existing infrastructure on ecosystems;
- Identifying and implementing opportunities to support and enhance biodiversity (i.e., habitat and species) conservation efforts to meet or exceed applicable legislation and guidelines; and
- Identifying opportunities to enhance ecosystems to meet or exceed applicable legislation and guidelines.

When will vegetation removals occur?

You may see workers in the corridor removing vegetation in 2020, and there may be some noise that comes with the work being done. Removals may take place outside of daylight hours and on weekends. Work is planned around train schedules in order to minimize operational impacts.

Vegetation removals will be phased as the GO network expands over the next several years. In 2020, Metrolinx contractors will begin the first phase of removals from within Metrolinx corridors. The next phase will focus on the removals from adjacent municipal and conservation authority lands. In the last phase, Metrolinx will work with property owners on the removals from the private properties.

How will Metrolinx implement restoration?

Implementation of restoration projects will be completed through partnerships with external organizations to compensate for removals on Metrolinx owned lands, as well as address ecological compensation. Projects will be funded by Metrolinx, and include the following key components:

- Compensation will be provided through ecological restoration, such as the creation or enhancement of habitat to offset the impact of the tree and vegetation removal;
- Priority restoration to same feature/sub-watershed.
- Funds will be made available on a project by project basis through a process established by Metrolinx; and
- No funds will be diverted towards the acquisition of property.

In a proactive effort to enhance the health of ecosystems, Metrolinx and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) are working together to implement restoration projects by planting 5 hectares within the City of Toronto's Natural Heritage System, which is about 5,500 trees and 15,000 shrubs.

How will Metrolinx manage vegetation along the electrified corridor after the removals?

Once removals are complete, Metrolinx will implement a vegetation management strategy, which will provide guidance and recommended plantings for zones adjacent to the rail corridor. Based on the objectives of the Vegetation Management Strategy, five (5) zones have been developed to protect Metrolinx infrastructure and ensure service reliability, including the 7 m vegetation clearance zone required for electrification. These zones are described in the table and graphic on this page.

Vegetation Management Guidelines:

- Zone 1

This zone is 2.9 metres from the centerline of the track to the Overhead Contact System (OCS) poles. No vegetation is allowed here because it conflicts with where the trains will be running.
- Zone 2

This zone is 2.5 metres and falls immediately outside the OCS poles. No vegetation is allowed here because of potential conflicts with the electrical infrastructure.
- Zone 3

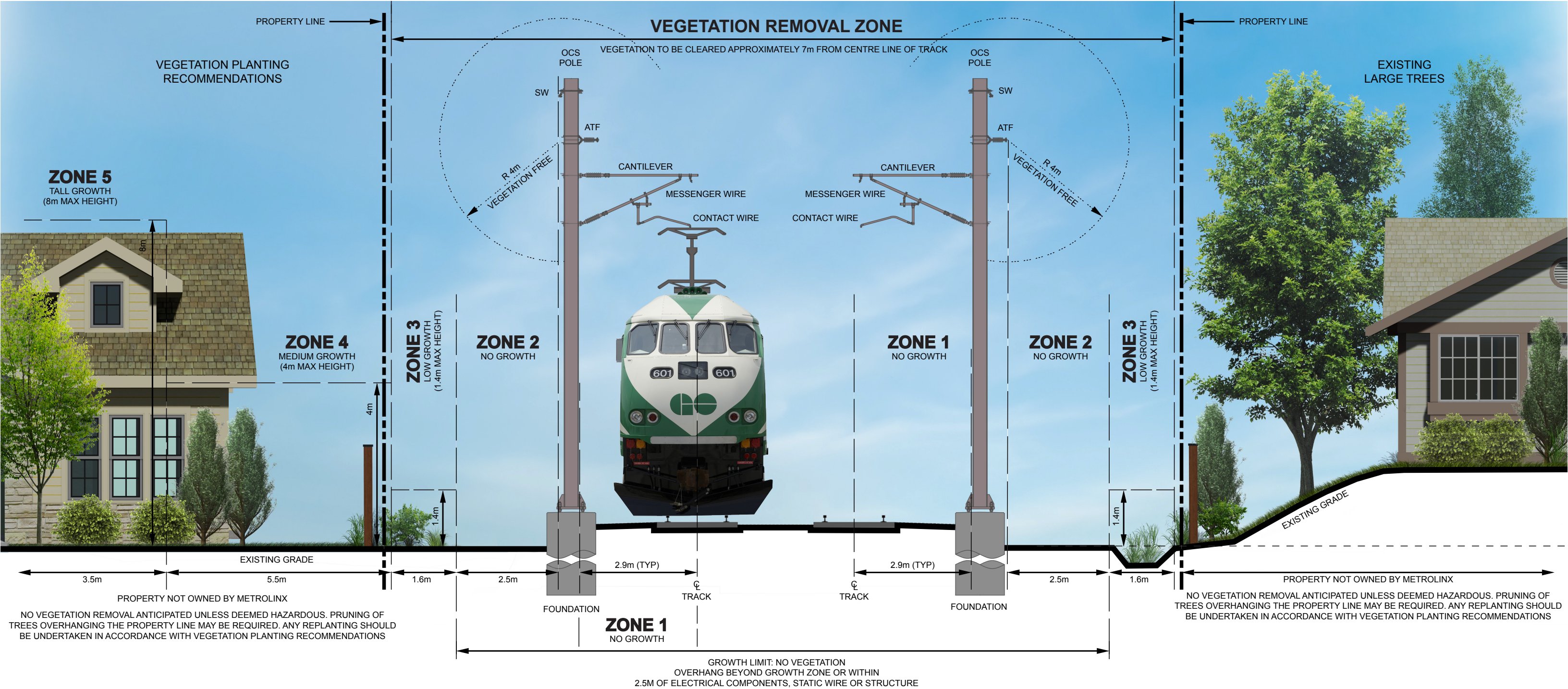
This is a 1.6 metre wide low growth zone where vegetation up to a height of 1.4 metres above track level will be permitted.

For Metrolinx-owned property, the following approach will be taken to vegetation removal and replanting in Zones 4 and 5. Where Metrolinx does not own the property in Zones 4 and 5, no changes to the property will be required (unless deemed hazardous)

- Zone 4

This is a 5.5 metre wide area outside of the vegetation clearance zone. In cases where this zone is being replanted, the new vegetation will be species that grow to medium height (4 metres above track level).
- Zone 5

This zone is a 3.5 metres wide area outside of the vegetation clearance zone. In cases where this zone is being replanted, it is recommended that new vegetation will be species that grow up to 8 metres above track level.



How will Metrolinx compensate for tree removal?

Metrolinx will work directly with landowners to address the loss of trees, including obtaining necessary permits to satisfy applicable by-laws and regulations (where relevant); and working with landowners to develop a compensation plan that is agreeable to the landowner.

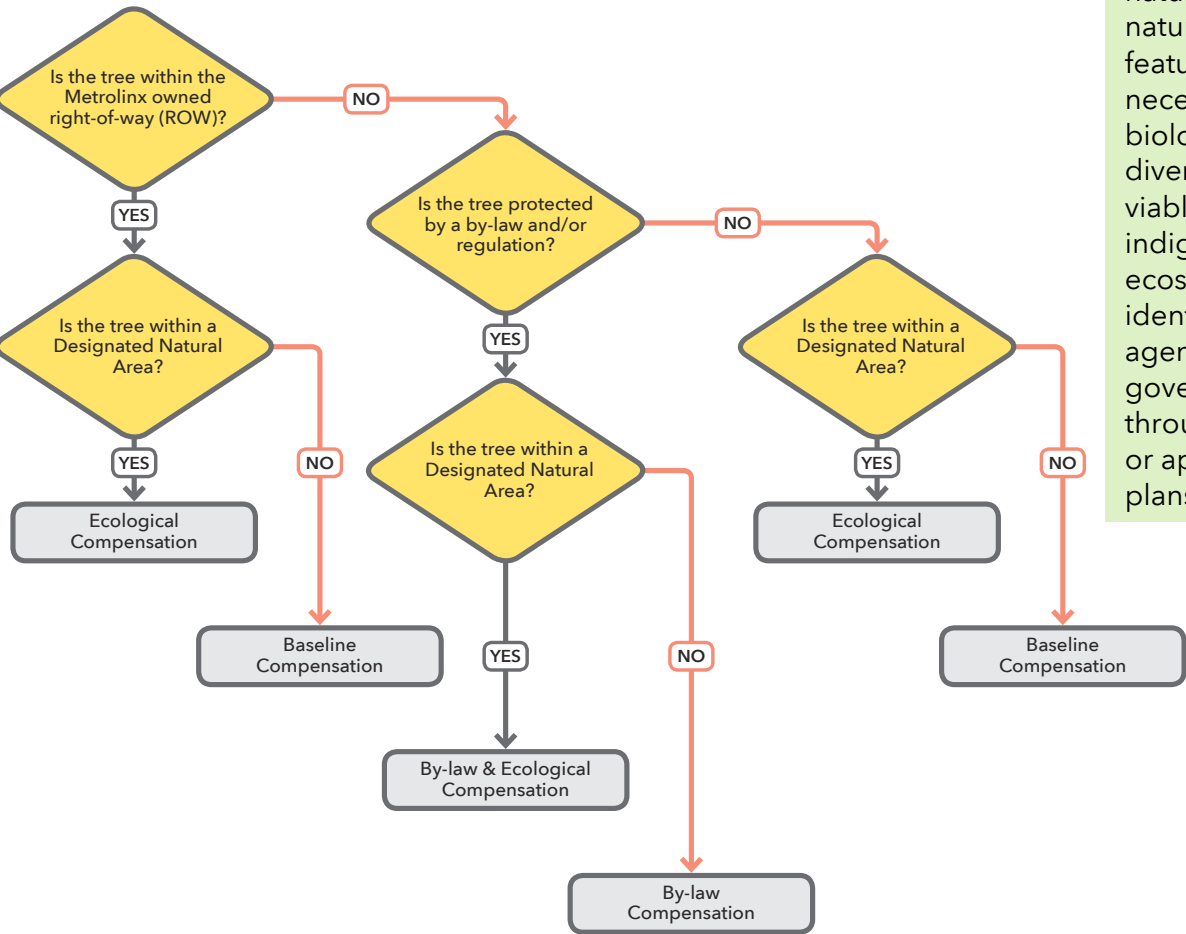
Depending on where the tree is located, one or more of the following compensation approaches will apply:

Baseline Compensation - Trees removed would be replaced on a 1-for-1 basis.

Bylaw Compensation for Public/Private Lands - Trees within public and private lands, including those on the boundary between Metrolinx and public or private lands, will be compensated based on applicable by-laws and regulations. If no by-laws or regulations apply and the tree is not in a Designated Natural Areas, public/private landowners receive baseline compensation

Ecological Compensation -Trees within a Designated Natural Area will be compensated through ecological restoration reflecting principles of the *TRCA Ecosystem Compensation Protocol* approach. The approach focuses on the creation or enhancement of habitat. Compensation will be scientifically calculated to replace the loss of ecological functioning.

The figure below provides an illustrative flowchart for determining and implementing vegetation compensation.



A boundary tree is a tree whose trunk is growing across one or more property lines. Based on the Forestry Act, tree ownership is determined by where it is rooted, and by the location of the trunk below the first branches. If the tree parts above the ground up to the first branches overlaps more than one property, it is jointly owned by both property owners.

Designated Natural Areas include natural heritage systems that provide connectivity and support natural processes. The natural heritage systems' features and linkages are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems. These areas are identified by resource agencies, municipalities, the government and/or public through legislation, policies or approved management plans.

What does it mean for my tree?

If a tree on your property is affected, a Metrolinx representative will reach out to you directly in the coming months. As the first step, we will work with you to confirm that the tree or any overhanging branches on your property need to be removed, provide you with a Tree Removal Resident Information Package that explains options for tree replacement, and discuss next steps.

Where can I find more information?

The Vegetation Guideline can be found on Metrolinx's Vegetation Compensation and Removal Program website:

[MetrolinxEngage.com/en/engagement-initiatives/vegetation-removal-and-compensation-program](https://metrolinxengage.com/en/engagement-initiatives/vegetation-removal-and-compensation-program)

Or scan here to go to the vegetation removal and compensation program website



How will the wood from the trees removed from the corridor be used?

The high-value wood removed from the corridor will be diverted to local organizations and communities to provide them with wood products that would otherwise be mulched or disposed into landfills. Metrolinx will identify community groups, organizations, and institutions who are interested in receiving wood from the vegetation removal work. The majority of wood to be removed as part of GO Expansion will not be of high commercial value and therefore will be used for wood chipping and mulching.



This Info Sheet is part of a package of Info Sheets and a Discussion Guide provided by Metrolinx to share updates on system-wide studies and policies. The current set of Info Sheets cover a number of different topics, including: GO Expansion benefits, heritage conservation, electromagnetic fields and electromagnetic interference, grade separations, and new approach to construction management.

For More Information

For more information about GO Expansion and to download other materials, check out our website: [MetrolinxEngage.com](https://metrolinxengage.com)
