



EASTERN ONTARIO RAIL TRAIL LOOP

Marketing Needs ASSESSMENT

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EASTERN ONTARIO RAIL TRAIL LOOP – MARKETING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop (EORTL) is a regional initiative to create a 360-kilometre continuous cycling experience across Renfrew, Lanark, and Frontenac Counties and the Township of Rideau Lakes and Town of Smiths Falls. The project is currently in its development and industry-engagement phase, supported by a completed [Trail Readiness Assessment](#), [Community Engagement Plan](#), and [Industry Communications Toolkit](#).

These foundational documents outline infrastructure status, market-ready segments, industry messaging, and partner guidance.

The purpose of the Marketing Needs Assessment is to identify the tools, assets, systems, and preparatory work required to ensure the Loop can be successfully marketed to consumers when it becomes market-ready in 2030.

While the Loop's target is to be export-ready by 2030, this does not mean consumer marketing may not commence prior to that point. Portions of the Loop may become suitable for phased domestic consumer promotion prior to 2030.

Export readiness represents an additional layer of market preparedness, requiring higher standards of service readiness, trade/operator alignment, and market-specific assets, which will build upon the domestic marketing foundations established through earlier phases.

The Marketing Needs Assessment is designed as a bridge between the current industry-focused communications approach, and the future consumer-focused marketing strategy that will launch the trail when conditions allow.

This document outlines what must be in place to ensure partners are prepared for effective consumer marketing. This assessment builds on foundational information found in the following documents and digital presence:

- [Rail Trail Loop Tourism Assessment](#) findings
(trail conditions, market-ready segments, tourism opportunity)
- [Industry Communications Toolkit](#)
(messaging, brand foundations, industry engagement framework)
- [OHTO.ca project webpage](#),
which positions the Loop as a developing regional cycle tourism asset

These documents provide the trail development context, current project brand, and industry messaging. Together, they form the operational and industry communications foundation for the trail.

KEY MARKETING GAPS

Before consumer promotion of the trail beings, there are marketing gaps in assets and brand that must be addressed, specifically:

Industry Assets

- Counties need access to collateral such as sell sheets and marketing materials geared to the industry to build buy-in for the trail

Branding Gaps

- The current project brand is industry-focused and project-oriented. A consumer-facing brand identity for the Loop is not yet developed
- Logo, visual system, and tagline for consumers are not finalized
- Consumer messaging framework
- The eventual name of the experience may change

Strategic Documents

- No clear path forward for uniting partners in a strategically coordinated way for marketing to the consumer
- Turnkey marketing solutions needed for municipal and county partners to reduce their workload and resource constraints
- No understanding of the needs for promotion to the travel trade international market once the product is export-ready

Visual & Storytelling Asset Gaps

- Need for consumer-focused photography and video assets
- Storytelling assets such as maps, content development articles, or itineraries
- There is no cohesive digital presence on a dedicated webpage that is consumer-facing

Digital Infrastructure Gaps

- Need for a consumer website or portal page and/or interactive map
- No curated digital route library, trip-planning tools, or trail conditions platform (ie. Ride with GPS, Map My Ride etc.)

Data Collection Gaps

- No way of establishing benchmarks for measurement of success

These gaps are a natural reflection of the current state of the trail as an evolving marketing product. Consumer marketing should not begin until the experience is fully market-ready.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop is a unique 360-kilometre cycling route created by linking existing rail trails located across multiple counties. The rail trail cycling experience offers a mostly level, gravel ride, which is an ideal combination for hybrid cyclists, gravel riders, novice cyclists, and slow-travel enthusiasts.

As documented in the Rail Trail Loop Tourism Assessment:

- Many segments are already highly appealing, but not fully market-ready in meeting the hybrid cyclists needs
- The full Loop requires wayfinding, surface improvements, community readiness, and marketing assets
- When complete, the Loop is projected to generate over 200,000 cyclist visits and more than \$100 million in total economic impact annually

The trail is expected to be market-ready for consumer promotion by 2030, once readiness criteria identified in the assessment have been met. Select segments of the Loop may support interim domestic promotion prior to full loop completion.

This Marketing Needs Assessment outlines the foundations needed to transition from the development phase to a fully market-ready launch.

Marketing Needs Assessment vs. Marketing Strategy

It is important to note this document is **not intended to function as a marketing strategy**. A marketing strategy requires fixed inputs/details that are not yet available, including a confirmed name, finalized consumer brand, asset libraries and clear governance framework.

This document will instead focus on what marketing components are needed and must be prepared between 2026 and 2030. It will outline inputs that will eventually lead to the development of a full consumer marketing strategy.

Scope of Document

This document will deliver on the following:

- Identify required marketing assets
- Describe consumer brand needs
- Outline digital and storytelling requirements
- Highlight gaps in market-readiness
- Define dependencies leading to the 2030 consumer launch

MARKETING ENVIRONMENT AT A GLANCE

The consumer marketing for the Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop will launch into a rapidly growing and evolving cycling tourism landscape. While this Marketing Needs Assessment is not intended to provide a full strategic market analysis, it is essential to identify the high-level environmental factors that will shape the requirements for a future marketing strategy. These insights help clarify what information, assets, and infrastructure must be developed to properly position the Loop when it becomes market-ready in 2030.

This snapshot draws on insights from the Rail Trail Loop Tourism Assessment, the Industry Communications Toolkit, and OHTO's industry communications to identify the key market conditions relevant to both trail development and future marketing readiness.

Cycling Trends and Data

Cycling tourism trends relevant to the EORTL indicate that demand for rail trails and off-road cycling is increasing, with a rise in:

- Gravel cycling
- Rail trail use
- Recreational cycling for novices
- Multi-day bikepacking and touring
- E-bike usage

Further, as identified in the communications toolkit and tourism assessment, cyclists are coveted, high-yield visitors spending an average of \$250 to \$300 per day, significantly higher than average visitors.

Cycling tourists are increasingly looking for cycling experiences that take them to small towns and rural landscapes, where they can learn about heritage and experience local flavours.



EORTL's Competitive Response

The communications toolkit notes that the EORTL's identity is rooted in:

- Railway heritage
- Rural character
- Natural landscapes
- Small communities

These themes will form the backbone for future storytelling strategies, reinforcing the importance of gathering high-quality visual and storytelling assets that will deliver on communications on these points.

When contemplating marketing needs assessment it is important to keep in mind the competitive nature of cycling tourism, which has been increasing rapidly in the last five years. The EORTL will enter a competitive arena that includes well established cycling trail tourism brands and in order to stand out it will need to have the following:

- Distinct consumer brand
- Dedicated digital presence
- Cutting-edge digital infrastructure
- Persuasive storytelling



MARKETING READINESS FRAMEWORK

Marketing Readiness Framework

The Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop will not be fully market-ready until several foundational conditions have been met across the domains of infrastructure, brand, digital experience, partner readiness, and supporting assets. The Marketing Readiness Framework has been communicated in the tourism assessment and provides a clear pathway to outline what must be achieved before consumer marketing can begin.

It is important to note the distinction between export-readiness and market-readiness for the Loop. While the Loop's target is to be export-ready by 2030, this does not preclude an earlier readiness for the domestic market. Portions of the Loop may be ready for consumer promotion prior to 2030. Export readiness on the other hand requires a higher standard of service readiness and marketing assets which will build on the domestic marketing foundation.

The Marketing Readiness Framework connects trail development milestones with marketing requirements to ensure the Loop enters the domestic and international markets only when the visitor experience aligns with brand promises and consumer expectations.

Readiness Pillars

The framework is organized around five readiness pillars that indicate activities needed to reach market and export readiness for the trail.



EXPERIENCE READINESS

- Completion of priority wayfinding, surface improvements, safety enhancements, and trail access points (as identified in the Trail Readiness Assessment).
- Completion of key market-ready segments suitable for promotional photography and video.
- Sufficient amenities in trail towns to support novice and multi-day riders.



BRAND READINESS

- Marketing strategy developed with implementation/ action plan.
- Finalize trail loop name and consumer-facing brand identity.
- Establish brand guidelines adopted by counties, municipalities, and tourism operators.
- Create supporting brand tools (templates, signage references, visual assets).



DIGITAL READINESS

- Consumer-facing website or webpage with interactive mapping.
- GPX library, route descriptions, itineraries, and digital planning tools.
- A digital presence aligned with the consumer brand.



ASSET READINESS

- Complete photography and video library.
- Storytelling assets (narratives, itineraries, editorial content).
- Industry-focused collateral to recruit businesses and partners ahead of launch.



PARTNER READINESS

- Trail Town recruitment and onboarding completed.
- Consumer marketing toolkit for partners developed and distributed.
- Coordinated messaging and shared understanding of the 2030 launch timeline.

This framework ensures the trail enters the consumer marketplace with strong positioning, cohesive communications, and a visitor experience that can meet demand.

MARKETING ASSET REQUIREMENTS

The marketing assets outlined in this section represent the core building blocks required to support a successful consumer launch of the Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop in 2030. While the current project phase is supported by industry-focused communications tools, the transition toward a public-facing brand and consumer marketing strategy calls for an expanded collection of visual, digital, storytelling, and strategic assets that do not yet exist.

These asset requirements reflect both best practices identified in comparable cycling destinations and the specific needs of the Loop as identified through the Tourism Assessment, the Industry Communications Toolkit, and the intended visitor experience. These assets are long-term investments that must be developed in a coordinated way as the trail approaches market readiness.

To support effective consumer marketing, the Loop will need:

- 1. Industry collateral assets** to gain buy-in from businesses and partners
- 2. Strong consumer-facing brand** to create a recognizable visual for the trail for use on signage and marketing materials
- 3. A collection of strategic guiding documents** that establish the direction, priorities, and actions required in the years leading to launch
- 4. High-quality visual assets** (photo and video) that authentically represent the completed experience of the Loop, to be used for both industry and consumer purposes
- 5. Storytelling and copywriting assets** that define how the Loop will be positioned to consumers
- 6. Digital infrastructure** directed to consumers to enable trip planning, navigation, and visitor confidence
- 7. A clear data framework** to help establish benchmarks, measure performance, refine strategy, and demonstrate impact

Each asset identified in the following tables includes specific requirements, the purpose behind its development, a recommended timeline for its creation, cost, and responsibility for completion. Collectively, these assets will form the foundation for the future consumer brand and marketing strategy, ensuring that when the Loop is ready for promotion, the tools, systems, and content needed to effectively introduce the experience to the market, are already in place.



INDUSTRY MARKETING ASSETS

Industry marketing assets are a necessity for building regional understanding and participation among businesses and community partners before consumer marketing begins. These tools are designed to communicate the value and opportunity of the Loop to municipalities, tourism operators, businesses, and community partners, ensuring they are well-informed and prepared to play an active role in shaping the visitor experience.

While the Industry Communications Toolkit provides guidance on how industry should communicate during the development phase, additional marketing materials are needed to support engagement, recruitment, and readiness across the region. These assets (including sell sheets, recruitment toolkits, and partner presentations) will assist partners in understanding what it means to be part of the Loop, what it is, why it matters, and how they can benefit.

Asset Type	Specific Requirements	Purpose / Why It's Needed	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Dependencies
Industry Explainer Brochure / Value Proposition Sheet	- What it means to be part of the EORTL - Project overview - Economic impact case - How to participate - Benefits to businesses & communities	- Builds awareness across industry - Supports partner recruitment & early engagement	2025–2026	\$350	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Photo assets - Branding
EORTL “Trail Town” Recruitment Toolkit	- How to be a “Trail Town/ cycle-friendly” - Amenities checklist - Bicycle-friendly standards	- Prepares communities for cyclist expectations - Supports business readiness	2026–2027	\$1,500	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight	- Marketing strategy - Brand completed
Presentation Deck	- Slides for councils, BIAs, funders - Maps, readiness visuals - Economic projections	- Assists advocacy & funding efforts - Ensures aligned regional messaging	2025–2027	\$350	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight	- Marketing strategy - Branding completed



CONSUMER MARKETING ASSETS

Brand Development

Developing a strong, consumer-facing brand will be essential to the successful launch of the Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop in 2030. While an industry-facing project identity currently supports communications with partners and partners, it is not necessarily the right brand for consumer use. A consumer brand must clearly articulate the Loop's value, personality, and experiential promise in a way that resonates with cyclists and differentiates the Loop from other similar cycling destinations. Brand development includes establishing a finalized name, visual identity, and core messaging that authentically reflect the completed experience of the Loop.

Brand development will require high-quality photography and video, insights into the visitor journey, trail readiness clarity, and an aligned understanding of the trail identity among regional partners. Once developed, the brand will guide all consumer-facing assets, including the website, itineraries, marketing campaigns, and ongoing promotional efforts. Developing this brand early enough in the pre-launch timeline ensures partners can adopt it consistently, and that all marketing efforts leading into 2030 present a cohesive, recognizable identity.

Brand Component	Specific Requirements	Purpose / Why It's Needed	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Dependencies
Consumer Brand Name	- Final name for the Loop - Audience testing - Domain & social availability	- Ensures clarity in the market - Aligns partners on a single identity	2026–2027	\$2,500 full logo package including launch templates	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	Approved marketing strategy
Visual Identity System	- Logo - Colour palette - Typography - Graphic elements	- Establishes recognizable brand assets - Ensures cohesive look across platforms	2026–2027	See above	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	
Brand Guidelines	- Voice & tone - Photography/ videography guidelines - Accessibility rules - Social media style and guidelines	- Ensures consistency across partners - Supports future content production	2027	See above	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	
Brand Application Tools	- Web templates - Partner templates - Signage references - Presentation layouts	- Enables consistent adoption across jurisdictions - Reduces fragmentation	2028	See above	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	
Brand Launch Assets	- Hero messaging - Launch visuals - Brand announcement materials	- Required for 2030 launch - Supports teasers & media engagement	2028–2029	See above	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	
Brand Narrative & Positioning	- Key message pillars - Emotional positioning - Brand story for web & campaigns	- Defines the experience promise - Supports website & launch campaign	2027–2028	Could be part of marketing strategy	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	

Strategic Documents

Strategic guiding documents should commence concurrently with the brand development, albeit slightly behind. This will allow the brand development to guide the brand direction needed to create a marketing strategy and other guiding documents. These documents will determine the direction, coordination, and implementation of consumer marketing as the Loop approaches launch.

These include a comprehensive marketing strategy, the launch campaign plan, and a partner consumer marketing communications toolkit. Together, these documents will set the framework for decision-making and execution across multiple counties and partners. These strategic assets are essential to coordinating regional messaging, aligning partners, and ensuring a unified, high-impact approach.

Document Type	Specific Requirements	Purpose / Why It's Needed	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Dependencies
Marketing Strategy	- Identify cohesive marketing identity - Marketing goals, objectives, and strategy - Audiences - Multi-year action plan - Marketing venues - Recommended advertising approach - Asset development and management plan	Required for a strategic consumer approach to communications and marketing	2027-2028	\$15,000	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Understanding of digital capacity - Understanding of marketing budget - Travel Trade strategy completed
Campaign Launch Plan	Communications and marketing plan to coordinate launch across all partners	Coordinates marketing efforts for the smooth launch of the Loop as a premiere cycling product	2029	\$2,000	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Approved marketing strategy - Photos/video assets ready - Partner toolkit in progress
Partner Consumer Marketing Communications Toolkit	- Key messages - Launch assets and plan - Social media templates - Digital copy guidelines - Storytelling/messaging guidelines	- Creates a unified voice for the trail across all partners - Provides partners with the tools and resources needed to easily and efficiently market the trail product	2028	\$6,500	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Marketing strategy completed - Brand developed and collateral ready - Photo/video assets ready
Travel Trade Strategy	Asset needs and approach for travel trade once Loop is export-ready	Ensures the product development and marketing activities support an "export-ready" offering for travel trade markets	2027	\$3,000	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight	
Legacy Marketing Strategy	- Longterm marketing framework - Identify goals, markets, themes - Annual workplan and budget	Ensures the loop continues to grow and evolve	2030+	\$2,500 every 2-3 years	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Full marketing strategy - Launch of the trail

Visual Assets

These assets will be used to market the region in both industry and consumer communications, to provide an inspirational view of the rail trail experience. High-quality visual assets are essential to establishing the Loop's future consumer brand and inspiring potential visitors. Photography and videography must authentically capture the landscapes, trail towns, attractions and experiential feel of the journey. These visual assets will serve as the foundation for the website, social media content, itineraries, promotional videos, and all launch campaign materials.

Visual storytelling, especially drone footage and rider-perspective video, will be a key differentiator in a competitive cycling tourism market and will help elevate the Loop to the standard of other nationally recognized long-distance routes.

Asset Type	Specific Requirements	Purpose / Why It's Needed	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Dependencies
Photography	- Market-ready segment photography (summer/winter) - Drone & aerial shots - Trail towns & businesses - Points of interest - Trailheads, amenities, signage - Specific to diverse user groups (ie. novice, e-bike etc.) - Total photo assets needed – 75-100 high-quality images - Two photo shoots minimum – summer and fall	- Essential for brand development - Required for website, social media, itineraries, and advertising campaigns - Must be authentic to place	2027-2029	\$3,000	Vendor – Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Basic brand direction - Marketing strategy completed to identify mood, themes, audiences - Branding and signage developed to utilize in filming/photos (unless shoots segmented over multiple years) - Travel Trade strategy
Video	1 X 2-3 min signature video (landscape/ portrait) 5 X 30-60 sec digital ads targeted for user groups 20 X Social-friendly clips - Drone flythroughs - B-roll - Minimum two video shoots – summer and fall	- Needed for launch of marketing campaign - High-impact digital promotion - Supports earned media	2028-2029	\$15,000	Vendor – Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	See above
Drone Footage	- Scenic flyovers - Town-to-trail transition visuals	- Elevates visual storytelling - Supports brand identity	2027-2029	Included in video	Vendor – Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	See above

Copywriting & Storytelling Assets

Compelling storytelling is critical to shaping the Loop's identity and communicating its value to consumers. Copywriting assets will articulate the region's rural charm, railway heritage, small-town warmth, and natural landscapes, shaping how the Loop is experienced through words. These content elements (ie. story themes, itineraries, segment descriptions, profiles of trail towns, and articles) will form the backbone of the future marketing strategy.

As anchor content for the website, campaigns, media outreach, and partner use, strong storytelling ensures a cohesive voice and emotional connection with the Loop. These storytelling assets will support SEO and paid marketing efforts by providing high-quality content that speaks to the motivations and interests of cycling tourists.

Asset Type	Specific Requirements	Purpose / Why It's Needed	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Dependencies
Themed Storytelling Messaging	- Rural charm - Heritage - Slow travel - Nature connection - Trail towns	- Foundation for consumer content - Ensures cohesive storytelling - Foundation for paid marketing	2027-2028	Could be part of marketing strategy (ie. personas content)	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	Marketing strategy completed
Itineraries	1-day, 2-day, multi-day - Gravel routes - Seasonal routes - Itineraries for each segment/ trail town - Launch target for 2 itineraries per county/ Rideau Lakes	- Core content for trip planning - Defines visitor journeys	2028-2029	\$3,000	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Marketing strategy - Digital presence identified and outlined
Experience Descriptions	- Key segment summaries - Highlighted features - Rider expectations	- Required for digital platform - Used in brochures, itineraries, media	2028-2029	\$500	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	Marketing strategy
Editorial Content	- Meet the Trail Towns - Top 5 Loop Day Trips - Heritage stories - Local business features - Launch target for 3 solid listicles aimed at specific themes/ audiences	- Supports SEO - Drives organic traffic - Builds emotional connection	2028-2029	\$1,500	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	Marketing strategy
Travel Trade Content	- Travel trade focused itineraries and stories - Travel-trade copywriting to meet their needs for promotion - Translation	Supports integration to international markets	2028-2029	\$1,500	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Input	Travel trade strategy
Interpretive Storytelling	- Rail history - Ecology/natural features - Cultural points of interest - Launch target of 3 articles focused on niche topics	- Enhances visitor experience - Builds depth and local relevance	2028-2029	\$1,500	Vendor - Execute OHTO -Oversight Project Partner - Input	Marketing strategy

Digital Infrastructure

Digital infrastructure is the backbone of trip planning and one of the most important components of visitor market-readiness. A consumer-facing website, interactive map integrations, GPX library, and digital asset management system will ensure visitors can confidently plan, navigate, and enjoy the Loop. These tools must be accurate, intuitive, and robust enough to compete with established cycling destinations.

A well-thought-out and planned digital infrastructure will also support marketing performance by enabling calls-to-action, and providing a centralized destination for storytelling copy. Without a cohesive digital ecosystem, consumer marketing cannot operate effectively.

Digital Asset	Specific Requirements	Purpose / Why It's Needed	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Dependencies
Consumer Website or Webpage	- Interactive map addition (Ride with GPS integration) - GPX downloads - Trip-planning tools - Revisions to itineraries on ComeWander.ca	- Primary digital home for consumers - Essential for trip planning - Essential for advertising CTA	2027-2028	\$4,000	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Branding - Photo assets - Map platform identified
Interactive Map Platform (Ride with GPS)	- Elevation profiles - POIs and services - Trailheads - Parking - Surface conditions	- Essential for cyclist trip planning - Benchmark requirement for competitive loops	2027-2028	\$1,500 per year	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Input	- Copywriting and storytelling POI identified - Photography
GPX Library	- Full loop - Sectional rides - Themed routes	- Required by cycling visitors - Needed for apps, devices, partner sites	2027-2028	\$1,500 to contract for development/ uploading to GPX	Vendor - Execute OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Input	
Digital Asset Management System	- Shared cloud library - Permissions for partners - Photo/ video/ map downloads	- Ensures consistent use of brand assets - Supports counties and operators	2028-2029		OHTO - Execute	Digital photo and video asset development



Data Framework

A reliable data framework is necessary to track the Loop's long-term performance, strengthen future marketing decisions, and demonstrate tourism impact to partners and funders. This data will provide the baseline required for future strategy development and ongoing evaluation after launch. This information will be critical to refining target markets, optimizing campaigns, and validating the Loop's economic benefit to communities.

Data Type	Specific Requirements	Purpose / Why It's Needed	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Dependencies
Data Framework	Outline for data collection requirements and frequency pre and post launch	Provides guidance for DMOs and municipalities for frequency and base metrics needed	2026-2029	\$500	OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Execute	None
Visitor Counts	User surveys	Baseline for ROI and growth measurement	2026-2029	N/A	OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Execute	None
Visitor Spending	- Surveys - Local business data	Determine economic impact	2026-2029	N/A	OHTO - Oversight Project Partner - Execute	
Origin Markets	Digital analytics	Informs strategy targeting	2027-2029	N/A	OHTO - Execute	
Search & Web Data	- SEO audit - Search terms - Digital performances/ metrics	Supports website design and content	2027-2028	\$1000	OHTO - Execute	
Partner Readiness	- Business participation - Service availability	Ensures consistent visitor experience	2028-2029	N/A	Project Partner - Execute	



ANNUAL PHASING FOR MARKETING READINESS (2026–2030)

The following outlines a phased approach for marketing preparations for the consumer launch for the Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop between 2026 and 2030. The phasing ensures that foundational work is completed before higher-level activities begin, and that major marketing investments occur only when the product is ready to support them.

Phase	Description
2025-2026 Early Preparation & Industry Alignment	• Develop industry collateral • Engage partners; Trail Town readiness • Establish project governance for brand & marketing integration (handled in separate document) • Begin data collection planning
2026-2027 Brand Foundation & Early Digital Planning	• Finalize consumer name • Develop a visual identity system • Draft brand guidelines • Begin narrative/positioning work • Outline website and mapping requirements
2027-2028 Digital Build & Content Framework Development	• Build consumer website/webpage • Create GPX library and interactive map • Contract and begin process for photography/videography (first phase) to begin in 2028 • Develop storytelling themes • Begin drafting itineraries • Conduct SEO and digital structure setup
2028-2029 Content Production & Launch Preparation	• Full photo/video production • Finalize itineraries, editorial content • Develop partner marketing toolkit • Produce brand launch assets • Build digital asset management system • Prepare campaign launch plan • Begin transition from domestic market readiness to export-ready preparations to engage international audiences
2029-2030 Launch Execution	• Run 12–18 month launch campaign • Partner rollout of marketing toolkit • Push digital promotion and itinerary content • Media and influencer engagement • Measure early adoption & refine

NEXT STEPS:

The next steps outline the coordinated actions required to move from the current development phase into full marketing readiness for the 2030 consumer launch. These steps build directly on the Marketing Needs Assessment and are intended to guide resource planning, partner alignment, and the sequencing of marketing asset development.

1. Develop a multi-year marketing implementation roadmap covering 2026–2030 (2026)

Create a detailed, time-sequenced action plan that aligns marketing activities with trail development milestones, and human and financial resources of the project partners. This schedule should map when brand development, content creation, digital platform builds, and asset production will occur, and that each dependency is completed in the right order.

2. Source and contract vendors for key asset development (2026)

Initiate procurement process for specialized vendors required for creative development, including branding, website development, photography/videography, content writing, and digital mapping. Vendor contracting should be timed according to the implementation roadmap, with work commencing once sufficient trail segments have reached market readiness.

3. Begin phased development of the consumer-facing brand (2026/2027)

Initiate the brand development process, including naming, visual identity, positioning, messaging, and brand guidelines. Ensure this work begins early enough to support later stages such as website design, content creation, and launch asset development.

4. Initiate digital ecosystem development (2027/2028)

Begin building the consumer-facing website or webpage, integrating interactive maps, itineraries, and trip-planning tools. Ensure digital infrastructure reflects the emerging brand identity and is designed to scale as new assets become available.

5. Produce core visual and storytelling assets (2028/2029)

Undertake photo and video shoots once priority trail segments and trail towns are market-ready. Develop storytelling content including itineraries, experience descriptions, editorial features, and interpretive materials that will support both launch and ongoing marketing.

6. Build partner-ready marketing tools (2028/2029)

Create a consumer marketing toolkit for counties, municipalities, and tourism operators. Include key launch messages, templates, digital copy, social media plug and play graphics, and instructions for adopting the new brand.

7. Prepare for the 12–18 month launch window (2029/2030+)

Finalize the campaign launch plan, assemble launch assets, refine digital platforms, update itineraries, and prepare industry partners for coordinated marketing activity. This window should include pre-launch teasing, digital buildout, asset refinement, and final readiness checks.

8. Produce export-ready marketing assets (2029/2030)

Develop marketing materials tailored for international audiences, ensuring the Loop is positioned as an export-ready experience by the 2030 launch. This includes adapting core storytelling, visuals, and itineraries for long-haul travellers; creating translated or culturally adapted content as needed; and preparing assets that align with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada export-market standards.

9. Develop legacy marketing strategy and plan for the Loop (2030+)

Create a long-term marketing strategy that guides sustained promotion, brand stewardship, asset renewal, content updates, and annual budget planning beyond the initial launch campaign. This strategy should reflect post-launch learnings, visitor data, partner capacity, and evolving market trends to ensure the Loop grows as a signature cycling destination over time.

