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REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2023

SUBJECT **Service Planning 2024 – Transportation Community Need Summary**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide strategic context and an overview of services, initiatives and performance data related to the Transportation Community Need.

BACKGROUND

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the 2023-2026 Board Priorities on March 8, 2023. Staff then developed the 2023-2026 CRD Corporate Plan which was approved by the CRD Board on April 12, 2023.

The CRD Corporate Plan presents the work the organization needs to deliver over the four-year term, along with the critical regional, sub-regional and local services, to meet the region's most important needs (i.e., Community Needs) and advance the Board's Vision and Priorities. Board Priorities, Corporate Plan initiatives and core service delivery form the foundation of the five-year financial plan.

The 2024 planning cycle marks the first year of the implementation of the 2023-2026 CRD Corporate Plan. The CRD's annual service plans, known as Community Need Summaries, provide an overview of the operational and strategic context, services levels, initiatives, and performance data for each Community Need. They also provide details of the initiatives, associated staffing, timing and service levels required to advance the work in future years.

The Transportation Community Need Summary is attached as Appendix A. The desired outcome is that residents have access to convenient, green and affordable multi-modal transportation systems that enhance livability.

The CRD reports on the progress of its initiatives and services on a regular basis. The Board receives updates about the Board Strategic Priorities through the Chief Administrative Officer Quarterly Progress Reports. The CRD Board also receives an overview of progress made on delivering the Corporate Plan twice a year at the strategic check-in and provisional budget meetings, which take place in the spring and fall respectively. The next strategic check-in will take place in spring 2025. During the year, standing committees and commissions also fulfill an oversight and advisory role in relation to the work.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That Appendix A, Community Need Summary – Transportation, be approved as presented and form the basis of the 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

Alternative 2

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That Appendix A, Community Need Summary – Transportation, be approved as amended and form the basis of the 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

IMPLICATIONS

Governance Implications

In 2024, staff have prioritized programs and initiatives that:

- Advance 2023-2026 Board Priorities or Corporate Plan initiatives;
- Operationalize capital investments; and/or
- Are necessary to maintain a core service level following a regulatory change or where there is a safety risk to customers, communities, or staff.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) has reviewed and assessed all business cases and confirmed alignment with the criteria. ELT has determined that the consolidated package of work is appropriate and a proportional response to the CRD Board's and communities' expectations of the organization.

Financial Implications

To exercise constraint and cost containment, the CRD Board directed staff to keep the core inflationary adjustment to 3.5% through the 2024 Service and Financial Planning Guidelines.

Staff and management have taken the necessary steps to mitigate the financial impact of proposed initiatives as well as cost escalation and high inflation rate experienced in 2022 through to 2023.

Financial and staff impacts for initiatives will be summarized and included in the provisional budget which will be presented at the Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled for October 25, 2023. Starting this year, this will also include a five-year forecast of staffing level changes, which will be reviewed annually.

Service Delivery Implications

Appendix A includes information about existing service delivery, operational considerations and performance. Additional information has been provided below about the proposed changes for 2024.

Staff are proposing to advance four new initiatives for the Transportation Community Need that have financial implications for 2024, as shown in Table 1. The key drivers for the initiatives are:

1. advancing a Board or Corporate Plan Priority; and
2. adjustments to core service levels to maintain safety.

Table 1. Transportation Community Need Initiatives (2024)

Initiative	Implementation year(s)	Staff impacts (2024)	Incremental cost (2024)	Funding source
4a-1.1 Transportation service	2024–2025	0.5 New Term	\$422,000	Requisition
4b-1.1 Regional Trails Closure Policy Implementation Funding	2024-ongoing	-	\$35,000	Requisition
4b-2.1 Island Corridor Consultation	2024	-	\$600,000	Grant
4c-2.1 Regional Trails Project Engineer	2024–2028	1 New Term	\$117,000	Capital & requisition

The information in Table 1 reflects the business case costs which ELT reviewed as part of their annual assessment of initiatives. The financial impacts reflect full program costs, including cost of staffing.

4a-1.1 Transportation Service

Discrete transportation management approaches and municipal priorities can be at cross-purposes when it comes to establishing a consistent multi-modal approach to transportation, region wide. If done effectively, regional transportation authorities ease the transportation management and delivery burden on local governments, allowing them to focus on other priorities that are important to their residents. The CRD Board has prioritized the need to explore and advance an increased regional role in how transportation is managed and delivered. A new transportation service is needed as the first step toward advancing such governance changes.

As a first step, all municipalities, electoral areas and key partners in the region are being engaged between July and September 2023 to gather information about aspirations and regional consensus on a new transportation service. This information will be used to scope service level options within the Regional District’s statutory authorities to support the CRD Board’s goals to ease traffic congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and support higher rates of walking, cycling and transit use.

Initiative 4a-1.1 seeks a one-time budget adjustment to undertake this scoping work, namely a service feasibility study to identify, define and cost the new service levels, and a supporting facilitation or public engagement process. The initiative also seeks to create a part-time (0.5 FTE) two-year term position in the Financial Services Division to support this milestone project.

4b-1.1 Regional Trails Closure Policy Implementation Funding

The CRD operates and maintains a 100-kilometre multi-use regional trail network comprised of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, the Lochside Regional Trail and the E&N Rail Trail – Humpback Connector that connects key destinations throughout the region. Temporary closures are sometimes required on the regional trails to address operational issues, conduct regular maintenance or to complete infrastructure improvements and repairs. Such closures, either planned as part of the core service delivery or unplanned because of an emergency, can impede the use of the regional trails as transportation corridors if safe detour routes are not provided.

A new CRD Regional Trails Closure Policy was approved by the General Manager of Parks & Environmental Services in 2023, in accordance with the CRD's Policy Management Framework. The policy enhances the level of service provided to trail users by designing and implementing a transportation engineered detour route that meets All Ages and Abilities facility standards when a regional trail is temporarily closed.

Initiative 4b-1.1 seeks an ongoing increase to the Regional Parks core budget to support the implementation of the Regional Trail Closure Policy. Staff will retain the services of a transportation engineer to design detour routes around closures and for any necessary materials to implement the detour. The funding has been estimated to support up to seven trail closures per year.

4b-2.1 Island Corridor Consultation

The island rail corridor is a 295 kilometre protected rail corridor that connects the CRD to Courtenay. The Provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure has given the CRD \$600,000 in conditional grant funding to support the development of a shared vision for the future of this corridor. The funding, which was approved by Board resolution on April 12, 2023, must be used to consult and plan collaboratively with regional districts, First Nations, and other levels of government to secure this joint vision.

This initiative is retroactive as the funding has already been accepted by resolution and staff expect to start work on some of the deliverables in 2023. It has been submitted to track the work and secure the necessary internal resources. There are no additional resources (financial or staffing) required to progress the work.

4c-2.1 Regional Trail Project Engineer

The Galloping Goose and Lochside Regional Trails see two million and one million visits per year, respectively. The urban sections of these trails consist of a paved pathway for cyclists and pedestrians in a dual-direction flow. A study has been completed to evaluate options to widen and separate portions of the regional trails and to consider the installation of lighting along the corridors. The CRD Board approved accelerated implementation of the regional trails widening and lighting project in the summer.

Initiative 4c-2.1 seeks to create a new regular ongoing position in the Facilities Management & Engineering Services Division to support the delivery of the multiple phases of the widening and lighting project.

CONCLUSION

CRD staff are progressing initiatives identified in the 2023-2026 CRD Corporate Plan, including the Board Priorities. The CRD Board and commissions with delegated authorities determine resourcing through the annual review and approval of the provisional financial plan. To support decision-making, staff provide recommendations on funding, timing and service levels through the service and financial planning processes.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That Appendix A, Community Need Summary – Transportation, be approved as presented and form the basis of the 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

Submitted by:	Fran Lopez, M. Sc., Manager, Strategic Planning
Submitted by:	Jeff Leahy, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Emily Sinclair, MCIP, RPP, Acting General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P. Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Community Need Summary – Transportation