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REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2022

SUBJECT **Regional Trails – Widening & Lighting Policies**

ISSUE SUMMARY

In November 2021, the CRD Board requested that staff report back on current endeavors and the advisability of developing new policies relating to lighting and trail improvement/widening.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Trails Management Plan (RTMP, 2016) guides management of existing and future regional trails, including the Galloping Goose, Lochside and E&N regional trails, for a 15-year horizon. The RTMP further outlines permitted uses, trail development standards and management policy direction.

Based on direction in the RTMP, a Regional Trails Widening Study was prepared in 2020 to consider widening, separating and lighting two high-use urban sections along the Goose and the Lochside regional trails, respectively. The study recommended a separated-use pathway design with lighting be implemented, and provided specifics regarding the type of lighting to be used and a priority sequence for implementation. In October 2021, the CRD Board directed staff to actively develop partnerships and pursue grant funding opportunities, including submission to the federal Active Transportation Fund, to support implementation of the separated-use pathway design with lighting.

If approved by the Board, the updated Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) describes strategic priorities aimed at climate action and resiliency, as well as access and equity. Proposed actions to meet these strategic priorities include a number of initiatives that will improve the multi-modal transportation functionality of regional trails. Developing policy to support the successful implementation of these actions is recognized as an important step to be undertaken through an update to the RTMP, bringing it into alignment with CRD strategic priorities that have shifted since 2016.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

A CRD Board priority is to plan for and deliver an effective long-term regional multi-modal transportation system and to increase use of public transit, walking and cycling. The CRD's Regional Growth Strategy includes a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 61% from 2007 levels by 2038. Climate action has been a CRD Board priority since 2009 and, in 2019, the CRD Board declared a climate emergency. Regional trail improvements, such as widening, separation of uses and lighting on regional trails, may encourage more people to shift from gas vehicle use to active modes of transportation.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

In 2021, the CRD Board approved regional transportation priorities to reduce congestion, advance mode share targets for walking, cycling and transit use and take action on climate change. The Regional Transportation Plan (2014), and related Regional Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (2011), guide planning and development of a regional multi-modal transportation network. Policy direction relating to both widening/separating of uses and lighting is consistent with these plans' directions to increase options for, and use of, alternate modes of travel.

Intergovernmental Implications

The CRD's regional trails are located on, or near, the traditional territories of many First Nations and are managed under leases and licenses of occupation negotiated with the province and a number of municipalities. These governments and their agencies will be consulted on policy development relating to regional trails.

Social Implications

When the Regional Trails Management Plan was developed (2014-2016), the CRD provided no lighting along regional trails and had no plan to light regional trails. During the 2020 Widening Study's public engagement process, lighting was identified as a way of improving trail user experience and safety. A lighting policy for the regional trails will help to determine how and where lighting will be implemented and will be developed through a public engagement process for an updated RTMP.

Environmental & Climate Implications

The 2020 Widening Study proposes use of LED efficient lighting, the most environmentally sustainable choice outside of solar. Standardized design and service levels are recognized in the Strategic Plan as a key element of planning and implementing a regional active transportation network.

Service Delivery Implications

As regional trail widening and lighting are undertaken across the regional trail system, there will be resource implications associated with the planning, design, development and maintenance of the system. Lighting of regional trails and widening/separating use on regional trails is considered an increased service level requiring more staff time to manage and maintain.

Financial Implications

In 2022, the estimated cost for the initial 2 km of the Galloping Goose widening and lighting project, including engineering design, project management and construction, is \$6 million. The Strategic Plan identifies the need to develop a funding strategy to support priority regional trail enhancement and expansion projects, including: separated use pathway with lighting enhancements in high use sections of the Galloping Goose and Lochside regional trail development.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Trails Management Plan includes policy direction relating to when the CRD will consider widening a regional trail and/or separating uses into use-specific paths but does not provide design standards or implementation criteria. The Regional Trails Management Plan does not include policy direction for when lighting will be provided on regional trails. Once approved, the Strategic Plan identifies updating the Regional Trails Management Plan to include actions supporting a regional active transportation network, including the establishment of design standards and the development of policy supporting widening/separating and lighting. A funding strategy to support these initiatives is identified as a short-term strategy in the Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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