

**REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024**

SUBJECT Safety on Multi-Use Trails

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide a recommended approach to enhance safety on Capital Regional District's (CRD) multi-use trails given the growing popularity of motorized personal mobility devices, such as e-bikes.

BACKGROUND

At the July 10, 2024 CRD Board meeting, staff were directed to report back to the Regional Parks Committee with a proposed approach to undertake a comprehensive study on the safety of multi-use trails, with a focus on potential risks associated with cyclist speed and the use of e-bikes.

The safety of all users of the regional trail system has been, and continues to be, the top priority of the CRD in managing the trail system. In addition to ongoing operational efforts and continual improvement through monitoring and maintenance, the increase in numbers and diversity of trail users has been recognized and efforts made to enhance the safety of users. These efforts include:

- The 2016 Regional Trails Management Plan, which first identified the concept for trail widening, user separation and lighting on the busiest sections of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and Lochside Regional Trails to improve safety.
- In 2021, staff engaged a consultant to complete the Regional Trails Widening study. The study reviewed design concepts and configuration options for widening, separating and lighting, and provided recommendations based on user volumes and speeds. This work included a subsequent public engagement process.
- On August 9, 2023, the CRD Board approved pursuing a loan authorization to fund the Regional Trestle Renewal, Trail Widening and Lighting (RTWL) Project. The scope of the project includes critical infrastructure renewal for the Selkirk, Swan Lake and Brett Avenue trestles, and six kilometers of separated-use pathway design with lighting. Staff have started work on procurement, design and coordination to implement the project in multi-phases over a period of four years. Objectives of the RTWL Project already include items that were brought forward with the referral motion to enhance safety on multi-use trails, including using best practices from other jurisdictions for facility design in managing personal mobility devices, such as e-bikes. The separated, widened and lit trail will provide a completely different trail user experience and is anticipated to provide the most significant enhancement to safety on high-volume sections of the CRD's multi-use trails.
- At the February 21, 2024 CRD Transportation Committee meeting, staff presented results from a CRD Traffic Safety Commission literature review on e-bikes and micro-mobility safety. A resolution was passed to advocate to the provincial government to consider amending the BC Motor Vehicle Act to allow electric wheelchairs, mobility scooters and micro mobility devices to operate in a safe manner in designated bike lanes and/or routes.

- At the March 13, 2024 CRD Board meeting, staff were directed to report back on the findings of the design phase of the RTWL project, including but not limited to interim options and implications regarding the use of rigid bollards and possible alternatives, such as flexible bollards.
- At the July 10, 2024 CRD Board meeting, staff were directed to augment a signage program on the regional trails that reinforces legal requirements and courtesy protocols (i.e., speeds, passing with courtesy).

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That staff engage a consultant to develop a study to build on previous efforts and provide recommendations to further enhance safety on the CRD's multi-use trails in light of the evolving characteristics of trail users, including the increasing prevalence of motorized personal mobility devices, such as e-bikes.
2. That staff report back to the Regional Parks Committee on the findings of the safety study through bi-annual Regional Trestle Renewal, Trail Widening and Lighting Project updates

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

The study will be funded through the RTWL Project budget. Statutory approval has been received from Regional Parks Loan Authorization Bylaw No. 4588, totalling \$50 million in debt funds for the RTWL Project. The bylaw will be on the CRD Board September 11, 2024 meeting agenda for adoption.

Service Delivery Implications

Successful delivery of the CRD's regional trail system depends on trail user comfort and safety. Results of the safety study will identify enhancements focused on addressing the increase in motorized personal mobility devices, such as e-bikes, on CRD trails.

The safety study will review information and available data on personal mobility devices, including accident data, contributing factors, emerging best practice, results from previous studies and public consultation, as well as research from institutions such as the University of British Columbia's Research on Active Transportation Lab (REACT) in the Faculty of Applied Science. REACT's focus is in research to support Canadian governments and transportation engineers to accommodate and safely and equitably manage micromobility and has published recent relevant publications on operational speeds on multi-use trails based on vehicle type and motorization.

Additionally, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is updating the BC Active Transportation Design Guide to better reflect the needs of active transportation users, including updates to sections of the guidelines addressing micromobility. The safety study will review the emerging revisions to ensure design for the RTWL Project meets the newest edition of the design guidelines.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The CRD's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) sets a target for 15% of all trips in the region to be made by bicycle by 2038. As of 2022, bicycles account for 7.9% of regional trips, marking a 2.8% increase since 2017. This represents the largest growth among sustainable modes of transportation (biking, public transit and walking). Notably, while e-bikes comprise only 10% of all bicycles, they are responsible for 30% of all bicycle trips. This data underscores the significant role e-bikes can play in achieving the CRD's mode share targets, offering many of the conveniences of automobiles without contributing to congestion or emissions. Therefore, any new policies should recognize and promote the broader benefits of e-bikes to ensure continued adoption and progress toward our transportation goals.

CONCLUSION

On July 10, 2024, the CRD Board directed staff to report back to the CRD Regional Parks Committee with a proposed approach to undertake a study on the safety of the CRD's multi-use trails, with a focus on potential risks associated with cyclist speed and the use of e-bikes. Several safety enhancement initiatives are already underway, including widening, lighting and separating trail users on 6 km of the busiest sections of the regional trail system. Building on these efforts, staff will engage a consultant to conduct a comprehensive safety study with recommendations for further enhancements, addressing the growing use of motorized personal mobility devices. Staff will report back with findings through bi-annual updates as part of the RTWL Project.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That staff engage a consultant to develop a study to build on previous efforts and provide recommendations to further enhance safety on the CRD's multi-use trails in light of the evolving characteristics of trail users, including the increasing prevalence of motorized personal mobility devices, such as e-bikes.
2. That staff report back to the Regional Parks Committee on the findings of the safety study through bi-annual Regional Trestle Renewal, Trail Widening and Lighting Project updates.

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