

**REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025**

SUBJECT **Regional Trestles Renewal - Trails Widening and Lighting Project Update**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide a progress update on the Regional Trestles Renewal, Trails Widening and Lighting Project (RTWL), the Multi-Use Trails Safety Enhancement Study and a recommended option for the rehabilitation of Swan Lake Trestle.

BACKGROUND

On August 9, 2023, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved accelerating the Regional Trestles Renewal, Trails Widening and Lighting Project (the Project) for inclusion in the 2024 to 2028 Financial Plan. This includes securing \$53.5 million in project funds through debt, continuing to develop partnerships, pursuing grants and investigating non-tax revenue funding options. The Project scope includes critical infrastructure renewal for the Selkirk, Swan Lake and Brett Avenue trestles, and the development of six kilometers of separated use, widened pathway with lighting on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail (GGRT) and Lochside Regional Trail (LRT). Staff committed to providing biannual progress updates.

On October 9, 2024, the Board directed staff to engage a consultant to provide recommendations on additional safety enhancements on the CRD's multi-use trails, recognizing the evolving characteristics of trail users. Staff were asked to report back on the findings of the Multi-Use Trails Safety Enhancement Study (safety study) through the biannual Project updates.

This report outlines progress on the RTWL Project and the safety study since November 2024.

RTWL Project – Trestle Renewals Update

Selkirk Trestle

Critical below-deck repairs for Phase 1 of the Selkirk Trestle were completed in April 2025. These upgrades will support a widened deck and extend the trestle's lifespan by 25 to 30 years. Staff have begun the procurement process to hire a structural engineering firm for Phase 2, which includes widening the deck, adding lighting and resurfacing. Under an agreement between the BC Transportation Financing Authority (BCTFA) and the CRD, BCTFA is responsible for funding improvements to the lifting portion of the trestle (the bascule). BCTFA is working with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MoTT) Engineering Services to apply to Transport Canada to leave the bascule permanently in the down position. The timing of application submission and Transport Canada's decision is currently unknown. In the meantime, staff will proceed with detailed design work based on the assumption that the bascule will remain operational, while incorporating a future-proof design that allows for a non-lifting structure if approval is granted. A memorandum of understanding will be established between the CRD and BCTFA to outline responsibilities for funding the design and construction of their respective portions of the structure. Construction for Phase 2 is anticipated to begin in 2027.

Swan Lake and Brett Avenue Trestles

In February 2025, the Transportation Committee received a presentation outlining rehabilitation options for the Swan Lake and Brett Avenue trestles. At that time, staff expected to have all the necessary details to make a recommendation for both structures by spring. However, a new alternative for the Brett Avenue Trestle has since been identified. Additional time is now needed to further develop this new option. A final recommendation for the Brett Avenue Trestle will be presented once the concept is refined and cost analysis is completed. The CRD remains committed to coordinating the construction of the Swan Lake Trestle with the proposed Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary's Blenkinsop Creek Restoration Project, contingent on project timelines aligning. The restoration project relies on receiving grant funding, which is expected to be announced by the end of June 2025. While waiting for the grant decision, staff are seeking CRD Board approval to proceed with heritage alteration permitting from the District of Saanich and procuring a designer for the Swan Lake Trestle for Option 1 while preparing to pivot to Option 2 should the restoration project proceed. A summary of the options evaluation for Swan Lake Trestle is included in Appendix A.

Staff are currently engaged in discussions with the BCTFA to amend the existing lease agreement with the CRD in order to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for trail infrastructure located on BCTFA lands. This amendment is intended to provide long-term clarity on the management, operation, maintenance, and replacement of key structures such as the trestles. Although staff are meeting with the BCTFA on a quarterly basis to advance these discussions, the timeline for finalizing the agreement remains uncertain and may extend over several years. Additionally, any revisions to the lease will require the BCTFA to secure internal approvals, which include budgeting considerations and collaborating with interested First Nations to gain their consent. In the meantime, the RTWL Project is progressing under the current lease agreement and is funded through annual debt servicing, which can be adapted if responsibilities are amended.

RTWL Project – Trails Widening and Lighting Update

A consulting firm has been engaged and has started detailed design for the remaining sections of the Project area. The design will aim to achieve the 6.5-metre width separated-use standard along the trail; however, in certain areas where existing infrastructure, such as road overpasses, create physical constraints or other limitations exist, full compliance with the 6.5-metre width may not be feasible. In those cases, alternative design solutions and mitigation measures will be employed to maintain safety, accessibility and overall trail functionality. Some of the locations along the Project area where full width may not be feasible include Burnside Road E, Carey Road, Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue underpasses.

Construction on the section of the GGRT between Gorge Road E to Culduthel Road (Section A Phase 1) has been delayed until spring 2026 due to BC Hydro's emergency transmission cable replacement, which affects access and detour routes. Updated construction sequencing is shown in Appendix B. Distinct cyclist and pedestrian detours will be provided, coordinated with the City of Victoria, District of Saanich, BC Hydro and MoTT. Proposed detour routes for the 2026 trail closures are being developed in accordance with the CRD Regional Trails Closure Policy and are shown in Appendices C and D. Where possible, routes will use existing municipal infrastructure. Temporary infrastructure to support all ages and abilities will be used for detours, unless municipalities opt for permanent upgrades, in which case cost-sharing agreements may be considered.

A high-level design and construction timeline for each project element is presented in Appendix E and is based on the latest information provided by third-party projects happening within the Project corridor. The CRD continues to coordinate construction schedules with the MoTT Tillicum Active

Transportation Project and the Uptown Transit Mobility Hub, as well as, with BC Hydro's Emergency Cable Replacement Project and the City of Victoria's Sewer Replacement Project along Cecelia Ravine.

CRD Multi-Use Trails Safety Enhancement Study

At its October 9, 2024 meeting, the CRD Board directed staff to 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. A consulting firm was engaged in November 2024 to complete the work.

A draft of the report has been received, which includes recommendations on managing vehicle encroachment (i.e., use of bollards), improving intersections and crossings, evaluating facility types, data collection and upgrading trail surfaces. Before the report can be finalized, and findings presented to the CRD Board, it is necessary for staff to seek input from key interest holders, including the Regional Transportation Working Group and the agencies who own the lands where the multi-use trails are located. The CRD operates the multi-use trails through various legal agreements with municipalities, BCTFA and the Island Corridor Foundation. This consultation is essential, as the feedback gathered will directly impact the final outcomes of the study. It ensures that the recommendations are aligned with the needs and agreements of all parties involved. Staff have already initiated this engagement process and expect to finalize the report and bring it forward to the Transportation Committee for review by the end of the year.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That staff be directed to proceed with permitting and procuring a final design for the Swan Lake Trestle for Option 1 while preparing to pivot to Option 2 should the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary restoration project proceed; and
2. That the Regional Trestles Renewal, Trails Widening and Lighting Project Update – June 2025 be forwarded to the Regional Parks Committee for information.

Alternative 2

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

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Following the federal government's announcement of the Active Transportation Fund in late December 2024, staff dedicated substantial effort throughout January and February 2025 to complete a grant application for the Project. If successful, the Project could secure up to \$30 million in funding. Staff will continue to monitor relevant grant opportunities and apply as new funding sources become available. The Class D estimates for the recommended Swan Lake Trestle rehabilitation options fall within the original allocation for this component of the RTWL Project budget. At this stage, the overall Project remains on budget.

At the current stage of initiating detailed design work, there is no financial risk or cost difference between the two Swan Lake Trestle options. Staff are proceeding with the early design phase to

maintain the project timelines, ensuring that the overall project remains on budget. They anticipate confirming by the end of June whether the Swan Lake project will proceed. At that point, the preferred option will be selected and taken to the market for detailed design pricing, with updated cost information expected later this year as the design progresses further

First Nations Implications

CRD staff continue to work with MoTT on a coordinated First Nations consultation for the Project and are planning site walks with Nations later this year. Environmental assessment work is underway for the Project corridor and findings will be shared with Nations for input, which will be used to develop the environmental management plans for each phase of construction.

Service Delivery Implications

The successful development of the CRD's regional trail system relies on ensuring user comfort and safety. Findings from the Multi-Use Trails Safety Enhancement study will be shared with stakeholders, whose input will help shape detailed trail designs currently in progress for the Project. Additionally, these insights will contribute to a future update of the Regional Trails Management Plan.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Trestles Renewal, Trails Widening and Lighting Project has advanced with the completion of the Selkirk Trestle below-deck repairs, the commencement of detailed design for trail improvements and ongoing engagement with trail-user groups, First Nations and landowners. To reduce disruption, minimize costs and coordinate with third-party projects along the corridor, trail construction has been rescheduled to begin in spring 2026. Staff recommend proceeding with permitting and procuring a designer for the Swan Lake Trestle for rehabilitating the existing structure using a 30-span top-down approach to construction (Option 1), while preparing to pivot to a 16-span ground-up construction approach (Option 2) should the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary restoration project proceed. Next steps include completing the Multi-Use Trails Safety Enhancement Study with input from trail-user groups, municipalities and landowners, finalizing the options analysis for Brett Avenue Trestle and completing detailed design and detour plans for trail sections scheduled for construction in 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That staff be directed to proceed with permitting and procuring a final design for the Swan Lake Trestle for Option 1 while preparing to pivot to Option 2 should the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary restoration project proceed; and
2. That the Regional Trestles Renewal, Trails Widening and Lighting Project Update – June 2025 be forwarded to the Regional Parks Committee for information.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Swan Lake Trestle Options Summary
- Appendix B: 2026 Construction Project Area Map by Section and Phase
- Appendix C: Proposed Pedestrian and Cyclist Detour Alignment for Closure of Section A Phase 1
- Appendix D: Proposed Pedestrian and Cyclist Detour Alignment for Closure of Section C Phase 1
- Appendix E: Overall Project Design and Construction Timeline