



Making a difference...together

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

SUBJECT **Renewed Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present the renewed Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan for approval on an interim basis for one year.

BACKGROUND

The CRD Board initiated an update of the Regional Parks Strategic Plan at its meeting of December 8, 2021, and extended the 2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan until July 2022. Staff led the development of an updated Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) between January and June 2022 (Appendix A). The Strategic Plan reflects current Board priorities, related CRD strategies and corporate knowledge. Input from First Nations, stakeholders, the Regional Parks Committee, Transportation Committee and the public has been considered during the development of the Strategic Plan. Feedback, in general, aligns with the proposed document (Appendices B and C). A presentation outlining the key transportation highlights of the Strategic Plan is provided in Appendix D. A more in depth Strategic Plan presentation will be provided at the June 22, 2022 Regional Parks Committee meeting.

The Regional Parks Committee provided input on the proposed direction for the new Regional Parks Strategic Plan. On February 9, 2022, the CRD Board accepted the proposed vision, mission, values and priority statements for stakeholder, First Nations and public input, and recommended that a lens of conservation and protection of biodiversity be applied to the priorities and processes (Appendices B and C). Engagement with stakeholder groups and the public occurred between February and April 2022. Engagement with First Nations is ongoing and feedback received prior to May 31, 2022 is included in Appendix C.

Engagement with First Nations was facilitated by a consultant using a series of engagement methods from February to June 2022. First Nations whose traditional territories lie within the CRD boundary were invited to provide comment for input into the strategic plan (Appendix C). Staff will continue to seek meaningful and respectful engagement with First Nations during the interim approval period of the Strategic Plan. An interim approval will also provide the opportunity to initiate reconciliation efforts identified in the Strategic Plan.

The Transportation Committee Terms of Reference was approved by the CRD Board on March 9, 2022. The purpose of the Committee includes providing input into the Regional Parks Strategic Plan. The Transportation Committee provided input on the Strategic Plan at its April 20, 2022 meeting. The Committee recommended that the CRD Board change the name of the Strategic Plan to "Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan". The Committee also recommended that the Board direct staff to include actions in the Strategic Plan to improve service levels for regional trails, including detour reroute considerations, trail maintenance, network expansion, education and enforcement activities to support mode shift and reduce user conflict. The Committee also recommended that the Board direct staff to develop a funding strategy for regional trails to support the Strategic Plan, which also includes the trail widening and lighting plan.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Regional Parks Committee:
That the Capital Regional District Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 be approved on an interim basis for one year while engagement with First Nations continues.

Alternative 2

That the Capital Regional District Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 is accepted as a draft for public, stakeholder and First Nations engagement and the current Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021 is extended until June 2023.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The 2019-2022 CRD Board Priorities include ensuring appropriate funding for parks and trails infrastructure, improvements and maintenance by updating the Strategic Plan with consideration to ecological, recreation and reconciliation principles, land acquisition capacity, and expanded partnerships with First Nations and parks user groups. The 2019-2022 Corporate Plan envisions that residents of the region have additional land acquisitions and increased access to parks and recreational trails, and have access to convenient, green and affordable multi-modal transportation systems that enhance community well-being. These priorities are key drivers for this renewed Strategic Plan.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The region faces different challenges and opportunities since the Regional Parks Strategic Plan was adopted in 2012. The Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 is in alignment with a number of recent Board-approved strategies: Regional Growth Strategy, Regional Transportation Plan, Climate Action Strategy and the Special Task Force on First Nations Relations Final Report. The Strategic Plan creates strong linkages to Board directions, the engagement process, relevant legislation, guidance documents, operational knowledge and the feedback from public surveys.

Intergovernmental Implications

In developing this Strategic Plan, staff consulted representatives from other park agencies and other CRD divisions to understand how priorities for the CRD's regional parks may align with the goals and objectives of other agencies, with the aim of aligning desired outcomes between groups, strengthening partnerships, clarifying roles and responsibilities of the different agencies, and enhancing information sharing.

Working toward reconciliation with First Nations in the region is a foundational principle of the Strategic Plan. Fifteen First Nations have been invited to engage in the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan renewal and implementation in an ongoing and meaningful manner to determine how to strengthen relationships and what key priorities and initiatives are most important to work on together over the next 10 years. Priorities and actions included in the Strategic Plan draw on

past input and recommendations from First Nations in the region, such as those identified in the Special Task Force on First Nations Relations Final Report, as well as from input received to date from eight First Nations on the Strategic Plan update. WSANEC Leadership Council submitted a letter to the CRD on May 25, 2022 requesting additional information, and stating the Nations represented by the Leadership Council cannot support the Strategic Plan without further engagement. Staff recognize the limitations of the engagement timeline for First Nations to provide meaningful input and that First Nations communities have been under considerable strain over the past two years which, among other factors, have limited opportunity for dialogue. Staff recommend that the Strategic Plan be accepted on a one year interim basis in order to provide more time to engage and deepen an understanding of the issues and interests relevant to First Nations. An interim approval of the Plan will also provide the opportunity for reconciliation efforts identified in the plan to proceed.

Social Implications

A focus on accessibility and equity in the regional parks and trails system is included in the updated Strategic Plan. Initiatives that promote complete and connected communities by ensuring recreation, parks and green space can be easily accessed by transit, walking or cycling, and that strengthen an accessibility and equity lens in service delivery, are proposed that build on concepts in the Regional Growth Strategy and regional transportation priority areas. A focus on improving visitor experiences to regional parks and trails is also included in the updated Strategic Plan to encourage health and well-being, deliver interpretive education and foster stewardship.

Environmental & Climate Implications

Regional parks and trails are vital in helping to achieve the region's climate action, natural resource protection and active transportation goals. The Strategic Plan includes priorities for conservation research and monitoring, and for climate action and resiliency, including advancing regional active transportation opportunities that contribute to greenhouse gas reduction.

Service Delivery Implications

The CRD's Regional Parks division manages and operates the regional parks and regional trails system, while decision making is supported by advice and recommendations provided to the CRD Board through the Regional Parks Committee and the Transportation Committee. Changes to the operation and management of regional parks and regional trails will have service delivery implications.

The updated regional trails classification system proposes two distinct trail types to recognize the different functions: Urban Bike & Pedestrian and Rural Bike & Pedestrian. Priority regional trail improvement projects to be implemented over the next 10 years include: enhance high use sections of the Galloping Goose and Lochside by creating a separated-use pathway with lighting; E&N Phase 5, develop the Gulf Islands regional trail network; plan for and develop an extension of the Galloping Goose west. A funding strategy will be developed in fall 2023 to facilitate implementation of the regional trail initiatives identified in the Strategic Plan.

Financial Implications

Financial implications associated with service level adjustments identified by the updated Strategic Plan will be considered by the CRD Board in future service planning processes.

CONCLUSION

The CRD Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan provides a renewed vision, mission, values, priorities and actions to guide regional parks and trails service delivery from 2022 to 2032. This Strategic Plan was developed in consultation with agencies, stakeholders and the public, and with input from First Nations in the region. Interim approval of the plan for one year will provide additional engagement opportunities with First Nations. During the interim approval period, staff will continue to engage with First Nations in order to deepen an understanding of their issues and interests and allow reconciliation efforts identified in the Strategic Plan to commence.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Regional Parks Committee:
That the Capital Regional District Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 be approved on an interim basis for one year while engagement with First Nations continues.

Submitted by:	Jeff Leahy, RPF, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032
- Appendix B: Public Engagement Report
- Appendix C: First Nations Engagement Report
- Appendix D: Presentation