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REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2021

SUBJECT **Regional Trails Management Plan – Implementation Update**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide an update on the implementation of the Regional Trails Management Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Trails Management Plan (RTMP) was approved by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board in November 2016 (Appendix A). The purpose of the RTMP is to guide development, operation and management of regional trails over a 15-year period. It covers the three existing regional trails and provides direction for future regional trails.

The 96 km of regional trails receive nearly four million visits per year (Appendix B). They provide opportunities for active recreation and active transportation across the region.

Galloping Goose Regional Trail

This 55 km trail was established in 1987 along a former railway corridor. The majority of the route is owned by the Province of BC and a lease allows the CRD to develop, operate and maintain a regional trail within the corridor. Approximately 1.6 km of the route, south of the Selkirk Trestle, is owned and managed by the City of Victoria.

Lochside Regional Trail

The 29 km Lochside Regional Trail (Lochside) was established in 2001 and runs mainly along a former railway corridor. Approximately 12 km of the route are off-street, while 17 km are located on roads. The former rail corridor is owned by the municipalities through which it runs. Some sections of the trail are located on lands owned by the Province.

E&N Rail Trail – Humpback Connector

The E&N rail corridor is owned by the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF), a consortium of municipalities and First Nations, and the CRD has an agreement with ICF allowing the development, operation and maintenance of a regional trail within the corridor. Construction of the 17 km E&N Rail Trail was initiated in 2009 and the trail has been developed in five phases, with all but phase 4 and phase 5 completed.

The RTMP outlines 28 actions to be undertaken across all regional trails in a phased approach. Most notably, the CRD has completed Todd Creek Trestle rehabilitation, resurfacing on the Swan and Brett trestles, and the Widening/Separation study for part of the Galloping Goose and Lochside regional trails.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

To advance RTMP action items, the staff rely on the Regional Parks capital budget, as well as support from other agencies with jurisdiction in the trail corridors. Staff will also be applying for grants through the BC Active Transportation Grant Program and the federal/provincial Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. Innovative cost-sharing approaches have also been successful in supporting the implementation of the RTMP.

Social Implications

The RTMP was developed through a two-year public planning process. The plan provides strategic policy direction that applies to existing and future regional trails, as well as a management plan for each of the three existing regional trails. The regional trails are very popular for both recreation and active transportation, and further implementation of the RTMP will continue to support the increase in recreation and active transportation use by people of all ages and abilities.

Intergovernmental Implications

Regional trails exist in 11 municipalities and 1 electoral area. The RTMP was developed through a public planning process that included engagement opportunities for First Nations, municipalities/electoral areas, key stakeholders and the public. A municipal advisory committee provided input during the RTMP process. Liaison with the Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure, the Island Corridor Foundation and several of the municipalities occurs regularly.

Environmental & Climate Implications

The regional trails provide opportunities for the public to undertake active recreation and active transportation, which assists in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The regional trails create greenway corridors that protect natural vegetation buffers and enable wildlife movement. Environmental implications are considered when undertaking actions on the regional trails.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The implementation of the RTMP aligns with the Board's Climate Action & Environmental Stewardship priority. The RTMP also aligns with the corporate priority of parks and natural area protection and support for recreational access to inter-municipal trails.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The CRD Board declared a climate emergency in 2019, and Board Priorities for 2019-2022 identify green and affordable multi-modal transportation and reduced greenhouse gas emissions as desired outcomes. The RTMP aligns with these priorities and with the Regional Climate Action Strategy, Regional Transportation Plan and Regional Growth Strategy, and with policies from other agencies, such as the National Active Transportation Strategy; Clean BC; B.C.'s Active Transportation Strategy – Move, Commute, Connect; and the South Island Transportation Strategy.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Trails Management Plan (RTMP) guides the development, operation and management of regional trails over a 15-year period. Staff have been implementing actions identified in the RTMP and will be researching opportunities to increase access to alternative funding streams.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That this report be received for information.

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Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Regional Trails Management Plan
Appendix B: Regional Trails Map