

Report to Council



Date: March 7, 2016
File: 1850-01
To: City Manager
From: Andrew Gibbs, Senior Project Manager
Subject: Okanagan Rail Corridor - Status Report

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Senior Project Manager dated March 7, 2016, with respect to the Okanagan Rail Corridor.

Purpose:

To update Council on the progress of the Inter-jurisdictional Development Team (IDT) regarding development of a trail along the route of the transportation corridor that is the old CN Rail line.

Background:

INTER-JURISDICTIONAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Communities of the North Okanagan Valley have committed to the long-term vision of the former rail corridor as a multi-modal regional transportation corridor.

In February the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) joined the Inter-jurisdictional Development Team.

The Inter-Jurisdictional Development Team (now comprised of the local governments of Lake Country, Kelowna, Okanagan Indian Band and the Regional District of North Okanagan) are undertaking a planning and design process for the corridor that includes public consultation, cost estimating and development phasing prior to submission of a Trail Development Plan to their respective councils and board for consideration (April 2016).

The goal of the IDT is to establish a basic, continuous gravel trail along the length of the corridor.

THE TRAIL

The trail development is intended to be phased, starting with a basic trail: a continuous gravel-surfaced route from Kelowna to Coldstream, typically following the alignment of the discontinued rail line. Related improvements for this initial phase of development include road crossings, access control and regulatory signage. At this time any decision on other potential improvements to the trail corridor are being deferred until the fundraising campaign has been able to raise the funds necessary for the basic level of trail development.

The primary users of the trail are expected to be pedestrians and cyclists, with limitations on other activities (e.g. equestrian, pets) as necessary. Use of the trail by horses and dogs will be considered, but limitations on these activities can be expected. As a community commitment at the time of purchase there will be no motorized vehicles permitted (except service and emergency vehicles).

The trail will be constructed along the alignment of the old railway, to an approximate 4m width. Owing to challenging site conditions the trail is expected to be narrower along some sections of the corridor. The gravel surface and preferred width are intended in part to allow a asphalt surface to be applied to the trail sometime in the future if and as demand and ability allows.

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A team of consultants are working with the IDT on a fee and pro bono basis to prepare a Trail Development Plan for the corridor. The consultants engaged include Urban Systems (engineering & costing), Associated Engineering (environmental) and Ursus Heritage Consulting (archaeological). Additionally, a board member of the Okanagan Rail Trail Initiative is providing volunteer service to preparation of the Plan.

The Trail Development Plan will describe the general alignment, design and treatment of the trail, including road crossings, access control and regulatory signage, as well as key environmental and archaeological issues to be addressed. Critically, due to the long, linear nature of the corridor, the plan will recommend how construction of the trail will be staged for practicality and efficiency. Finally, the plan will provide a cost estimate for development of the trail.

It is important to note that this Trail Development Plan is a preliminary plan only, intended to scope out and cost what is required for development of a basic trail. The work being done at this early stage is being done in a manner that will accommodate enhanced infrastructure and amenities at a later date.

Local governments are invested in protecting the corridor and will be looking to a community-driven campaign to assist in funding development of this regional asset.

As fundraising goals are met it will be necessary to do a more detailed level of design, costing, construction staging and contract tendering for each phase of trail to be constructed.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The IDT will be engaging the public as part of the trail development planning exercise. The engagement plan calls for an information open house in each jurisdiction along the corridor. The purpose of these open houses is to advise citizens of the project and to solicit information from them regarding issues, opportunities and their values and opinions. The proposed alignment and design of the corridor will be displayed and staff and consultants will be in attendance. Immediately prior to each open house there will also be a dedicated opportunity for the owners of land adjacent to the corridor to view the trail plans.

For maximum exposure and efficient analysis, input from the public will be received online via a link provided on each jurisdiction's website. Feedback gathered will also be used for future reference in development of the trail to a higher standard or the provision of additional amenities, which may be considered after the initial phase of trail development is fully funded and implemented.

CN RAIL

Except for road crossings and some track in Kelowna, CN Rail and their contractor have removed all of the rail from the corridor. Over the next several weeks they will be removing the remaining structures and the spikes and plates left behind by removal of the rail. Removal of the ties will start in April. As of June 1 rail will begin to be removed from the road crossings and the voids will be patched with asphalt. This work will be coordinated with City requirements for traffic management and temporary road closures. CN is also working on their plans for remediation of select sites along the corridor, but has nothing conclusive to share at this point.

FUNDRAISING

It is the intent of the project to fund development of the entire basic level trail with minimal need for tax-funded local government money; it is the intent to rely on fundraising and donations to cover the costs necessary for development of the trail. To that end the IDT is finalizing negotiations with Okanagan Rail Trail Initiative (ORTI) to prepare a fundraising plan and lead the fundraising campaign for the trail. Donations generated by the campaign will be made to the two community foundations in the valley, Central Okanagan Foundation (COF) and North Okanagan Community Foundation (NOCF), enabling donors to be able to receive tax receipts for their donations.

SCHEDULE

The current schedule for the project features the following milestones:

- Information open houses
 - Lake Country Mon, Mar 14
 - Kelowna Tue, Mar 15
 - OKIB Duck Lake Reserve Wed, Mar 16
 - RDNO/Coldstream Thu, Mar 17
- Trail Development Plan complete Beginning of April
- Trail Development Plan to Councils/Board Mid April
- Fundraising Plan to Councils/Board Mid April

- Kick-off of fundraising campaign
- Start of trail construction

Following approval of plans
To be determined; subject to fundraising.
Except for access controls, likely not
in 2016.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Internal Circulation:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

Personnel Implications:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by:

A. Gibbs, Senior Project Manager

Approved for inclusion:



cc: D. Gilchrist, Divisional Director, Community Planning & Real Estate
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