

Report to Council



Date: April 18, 2016
File: 1850-01
To: City Manager
From: Andrew Gibbs, Senior Project Manager
Subject: Okanagan Rail Trail - Trail Development Plan (Progress Update)

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive, for information, the report from the Senior Project Manager, dated April 11, 2016, with respect to the Trail Development Plan prepared for development of the initial phase of the Okanagan Rail Trail;

AND THAT Council endorses the vision, concept plan, development approach and budget proposed in the Trail Development Plan;

AND FURTHER THAT Council directs staff to work with the Interjurisdictional Development Team on the development of detailed plans for construction of the initial phase of trail along the discontinued railway corridor.

Purpose:

To seek support of Council for the Trail Development Plan for the Okanagan Rail Trail corridor, as described in the attached report prepared by Urban Systems et al for the Inter-jurisdictional Development Team.

Background:

Interjurisdictional Development Team

In October 2015 the local governments of Kelowna, Lake Country and the Regional District of North Okanagan jointly established the Interjurisdictional Development Team (IDT). The Okanagan Indian Band joined the IDT in February 2016. The IDT, comprised of a staff representative from each jurisdiction, was established to undertake initial planning and consultation for the development of a public recreational trail along the discontinued railway corridor.

Trail Development Plan

Since its establishment the IDT has retained the expertise and services of various local consulting firms to assist with the preparation of a development plan and cost estimate for the trail. A copy of this plan is attached to this report. The Trail Development Plan identifies the vision, issues, assumptions, concept, development approach and estimated cost to develop a basic recreational trail along the route of the old railway, from Kelowna to Coldstream.

Community Engagement

In preparation of the Trail Development Plan, between March 14 and March 27, with the support of the consultants and staff from each partner, the IDT conducted a series of public open houses in each of the communities along the corridor. 940 people attended the open houses and the project website had over 10,000 views; 687 on-line surveys were completed. As part of these open houses public feedback was collected through an on-line survey and using hand written survey submissions for those attendees who indicated a preference for that form of input. A summary of the results of the public information meetings are included in the attached Trail Development Plan. Highlights of public input and feedback include:

- 96% of respondents support development of a trail in the Okanagan Rail Corridor.
- The majority of respondents indicated that they expected their main use of the trail to be in the form of walking, cycling or running. The next categories of expected use were horseback riding and dog walking (on leash).
- Collectively respondents ranked community benefits in the following order: recreation/fitness (28%), enjoyment of nature (25%), tourism (18%), commuting (17%) and small business opportunities (12%).
- Common themes that emerged from open-ended participant feedback included:
 - Importance of connectivity to existing trails, expanding routes or major destinations (particularly UBC Okanagan).
 - Private property concerns about trespassing, security, aesthetics.
 - Requests and suggestions about users (for and against dogs, for and against horses, electric assist bikes, power wheelchairs etc.).
 - Considerations for parking, maintenance and access to the trail.
 - Comments about preserving the natural aspects and wildlife.
 - Regional opportunities for tourism, business and commuting.

Environment

A high level environmental assessment of the corridor was conducted to identify environmentally sensitive sections and prioritize sections for action in the future. Specifically, sensitivities along the corridor were identified based on proximity to sensitive aquatic and terrestrial habitats, the need for regulatory permitting, and proximity to the Agricultural Land Reserve. The purpose of this assessment was to identify sites that will require more detailed study or the preparation of environmental management plans, as well as the regulatory and permitting requirements that will be required, in the future. This work will be undertaken prior to construction, as part of the next stages of trail planning and design.

Archaeology

The Okanagan Valley is the traditional territory of the Sqilxw people. The route of the corridor traverses land that has been used for the settlement, hunting, fishing, travel and culture of the Inkumupulux (i.e. the Okanagan Indian Band and their ancestors) for centuries. As part of the next stages of trail planning and design prior to construction of the trail, the IDT will be engaging an archaeologist to work with OKIB staff to identify suspected sites in order to avoid impacting them. It is noted that, as the planning and design of the corridor progresses, there will be opportunity to employ Inkumupulux language and culture (e.g. place names, signs, educational/interpretive sites) as part of the development of the rail corridor.

Trail Development

A basic standard of trail is being proposed for development at this time because:

- It enables early and safe public use of the trail corridor.
- The cost of trail development is significant and the timing and rate of fundraising to pay for the trail cannot yet be determined.
- It prioritizes expenditures on basic trail functionality items firstly (e.g. safety, access) and defers lower priority items, and the planning and funding thereof, to a future time (e.g. public washrooms, interpretive facilities).

Key features of the trail in the initial phase of development include:

- A continuous route of public access, from Coldstream to Kelowna.
- A 4.6m width (narrower in some areas where space is limited).
- A finished surface of compacted crushed aggregate, suitable for pedestrians and off-road bicycles.
- Safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings where the trail intersects a public road.
- Barriers and gates at road crossings and access points to limit access by unauthorized motorized vehicles.
- Conversion of existing railway bridges for safe public use.
- Directional and regulatory signage.

This basic level of trail will be designed and constructed such that additions or enhancements to it (e.g. asphaltting sections of trail) can be readily and economically made in future phases of work.

Estimated Cost

The estimated cost of developing the trail described in the Trail Development Plan is \$7.7 million. This is a preliminary estimate of costs (Class C).

Project Funding

In recognition that the local governments have already spent a significant amount of money to purchase the corridor and have many other high priority projects in their capital development plans, this initial phase of development of the rail trail corridor will be funded by donations. A fundraising campaign, led by the Okanagan Rail Trail Initiative (ORTI), in partnership with the Central Okanagan Foundation and the Community Foundation of the North Okanagan, will be run in order to raise the necessary funds. A report regarding the

Fundraising Plan for this initiative is provided to Council/Board as a separate item on their agenda.

Schedule

The phasing and timing of construction remains to be worked out. The most significant influence on the construction schedule is the raising of sufficient funds to undertake the work. Other factors include permit windows (e.g. environment) and construction logistics. Once CN Rail has completed removal of their railway infrastructure, and subject to the availability of donated funds, the first item of work to be undertaken will be the installation of barriers and access controls. This work is expected to take place in 2016. Other works will follow as funding allows.

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

The costs of staff time and consultants to date has been jointly funded this fiscal year by the local government partners of the Interjurisdictional Development Team in the amount of \$136,250; \$85,000 by the City of Kelowna. As a cost of trail development, the consultant portion of these costs will be reimbursed by revenues from the public fundraising campaign. As this money is reimbursed it will be used in order to retain the additional consultant services necessary to undertake the design work required get the project ready for construction. The staff time portion of these costs is not recoverable from donated funds. A new capital request, to cover staff time and the further consultant services that will be required to develop the trail, is being considered by IDT representatives as a budget submission for the 2017 fiscal year. Like the 2016 submission, consultant costs related to development of the trail can be recoverable from the donated funds.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Internal Circulation:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Personnel Implications:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by:

A. Gibbs, Senior Project Manager

Approved for inclusion:

(the department director initials here)

cc: A. Newcombe, Divisional Director, Infrastructure
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D. Gilchrist, Divisional Director, Community Planning & Real Estate
C. Weaden, Divisional Director, Communications and Information Services
G. Davidson, Director, Financial Services