



# STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

**DATE OF REPORT** May 7, 2021

**MEETING TYPE & DATE** Regional Services Committee Meeting of May 26, 2021

**FROM:** Parks & Trails Division  
Land Use Services Department

**SUBJECT:** Cowichan Valley Trail – North Watts Road to Greenhill Road Trail  
Completion and Funding

**FILE:**

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## **PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to present an option to complete both the Cowichan Valley Trail North Watts Road to Ladysmith Connection and staging area parking at North Watts Road with additional application of grant funding from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation.

## **RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION**

That it be recommended to the Board:

1. That construction of the Cowichan Valley Trail roadside trail connection along Chemainus Road between North Watts Road and Greenhill Drive (Ladysmith) include development of a designated parking area at North Watts Road, funded by \$300,000 approved for the project in Budget Function 280 - Regional Parks and a \$150,000 grant from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation.
2. That a License of Occupation with the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for construction of a roadside pathway and roadway crossing facilities on Chemainus Road between North Watts Road and Greenhill Drive, be approved.
3. That the 2021 budget for Function 280 – Regional Parks be amended to:
  1. Increase Grant Funding – General by \$150,000; and
  2. Increase Capital Expenditures – Lease Improvements by \$150,000.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Saltair Chemainus Rail with Trail segment of the Cowichan Valley Trail (CVT) includes the 12-kilometre multi-use trail within the E&N rail corridor between Crozier Road at the south end of Chemainus and North Watts Road in Saltair. The CVRD has received trail user and community feedback in support of completing the current gap in the regional trail between North Watts Road and Greenhill Drive (start of paved pathway on Chemainus Road in Ladysmith), along with requests to improve parking/trail access in the vicinity of North Watts Road. Annual use of the Saltair Chemainus Rail with Trail by cyclists, walkers and occasional equestrian riders has significantly increased in the past couple of years (increased by 56.7% from 2019 to 2020, with a total of 73,325 visits in 2020). The increase in trail use has also seen a corresponding increase in parking around the entrance to the trail at North Watts Road. There is a small informal area used by vehicles within the ICF's corridor; however, the number of parked cars regularly exceeds capacity with vehicles parking along North Watts Road and the Chemainus Road shoulder. The Regional District has received concerns about traffic congestion, access and safety associated with this increased parking.

The 2021 approved budget for Function 280 – Regional Parks includes \$300,000 in Short Term Borrowing to complete the regional trail connection between North Watts Road and Greenhill Road. The Regional District also remains eligible to expend a previously approved \$150,000 grant from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation. These funds were originally intended for investment in continuation of the Cowichan Valley Trail south of Chemainus as part of the route planned to connect with the existing trail near Highway 18 that continues out to Lake Cowichan. Due to ongoing route planning efforts and additional funding requirements for trail completion south, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation is agreeable for re-allocation of the \$150,000 grant to the North Watts Road to Ladysmith link completion project. The overall grant terms and conditions remain unchanged, with a key condition being such funds can only account for up to 35% of the overall project.

In response to increasing visitation and the concerns of local residents, the CVRD engaged with a third-party engineering firm to assess and design options for completion of the trail connection between North Watts Road and Greenhill Drive and for construction of a parking area to improve safety and meet current and anticipated demand.

#### **ANALYSIS**

The Parks & Trails Division engaged an engineering firm to prepare preliminary design drawings for the trail connection along Chemainus Road from North Watts Road to the start of Ladysmith's paved walkway at Greenhill Road, and assessing options for establishing a formal parking area in the vicinity of North Watts Road. These have been submitted for initial review by the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF). Upon direction of the Committee/Board to proceed with the project, the detailed design work will be completed for approval by the Ministry and ICF, inclusive of an application to the Ministry for a License of Occupation for the trail within the Chemainus Road right-of-way.

With reallocation of grant funds endorsed by the Trans Canada Trail Foundation, the project could be expanded to include both the trail connection and establishment of a designated trailside parking area at North Watts Road.

#### **Option A (recommended) – Roadside Trail Connection and Parking Lot**

- Construct 275 +/- metre separated roadside pathway along Chemainus Road connecting the Cowichan Valley Trail at North Watts Road to the Town of Ladysmith's paved pathway at Greenhill Drive;
- Pedestrian crosswalk on Chemainus Road at North Watts Road;
- Gravel vehicle parking area for up to 31 vehicles (potential spaces for horse trailers/bus);
- Staging area improvements (portable toilet/surround, signage, minor landscaping; and
- Cowichan Valley Rail with Trail minor extension to North Watts Road (area currently used for informal parking – required to complete trail connection).

Estimated Cost: \$450,000

#### **Option B – Roadside Trail Connection Only**

- Construct 275 +/- metre separated roadside pathway along Chemainus Road connecting the Cowichan Valley Trail at North Watts Road to the Town of Ladysmith's paved pathway at Greenhill Drive;
- Pedestrian crosswalk on Chemainus Road at North Watts Road; and
- Cowichan Valley Rail with Trail minor extension to North Watts Road (area currently used for informal parking – required to complete trail connection).

Estimated Cost: \$150,000

Proceeding with Option A would apply the full \$150,000 in grant funding available from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation. Under Option B, only 35 percent of the project would be covered by the grant (up to \$52,500). For either option the timeline for substantial completion of the project would be end of March, 2022.

#### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Trans Canada Trail Foundation has previously approved the \$150,000 for the Cowichan Valley Trail and these funds remain available for expenditure by the CVRD. The funds were originally earmarked for the Chemainus Rail with Trail South project; however, due to a combination of project delays and Trans Canada Trail internal funding requirements, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation has offered to adjust the agreement to instead allocate this funding to the Cowichan Valley Trail North Watts Road to Ladysmith Trail Connection and Staging Area development.

The 2021 Function 280 - Regional Parks budget includes \$300,000 in short term borrowing under capital for completion of the Cowichan Valley Trail Connection between North Watts Road and Ladysmith's paved pathway on Chemainus Road. A budget amendment is required to include the \$150,000 in grant funding from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation.

#### COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

#### STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

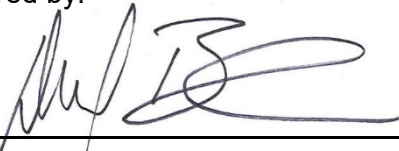
#### GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

☐ Not Applicable

Referred to (upon completion):

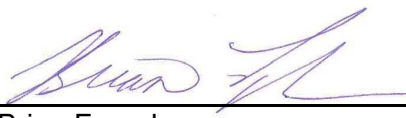
- ☐ Communications & Engagement
- ☐ Community Services (*Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Emergency Management, Facilities & Transit*)
- ☐ Corporate Services (*Finance, Human Resources, Legislative Services, Information Technology, Procurement*)
- ☐ Engineering Services (*Environmental Services, Recycling & Waste Management, Water Management*)
- ☐ Land Use Services (*Community Planning, Development Services, Inspection & Enforcement, Economic Development, Parks & Trails*)

Prepared by:

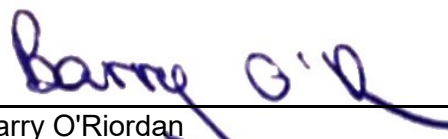


Dan Brown  
Parks Planning Technician (Trails)

Reviewed by:



Brian Farquhar  
Manager



Barry O'Riordan  
A/General Manager

Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

Financial Considerations:

☒ Manager, Legislative Services

☒ Manager, Finance

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A – Cowichan Valley Trail – Roadside Trail and Parking Lot Option