

**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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## STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

**PRESENTED:** June 21, 2022  
**REPORT:** 22-090  
**FROM:** Parks Planning and Utilities  
**FILE:** 1855-20  
**SUBJECT:** UBCM GRANT APPLICATION – ALPHA LAKE PROJECTS REPORT

### RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**That** the recommendation of the General Managers of Resort Experience and Infrastructure Services be endorsed.

### RECOMMENDATION

**That** Council endorse and authorize staff to submit an application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Strategic Priorities Fund for a grant to develop four interrelated park, Valley Trail, and municipal infrastructure elements on the lands adjacent to Alpha Lake, as described in the UBCM Strategic Priorities Fund Program Guide attached as Appendix A to Administrative Report 22-090; and if successful, direct staff to provide overall grant management in accordance with the UBCM's grant requirements.

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report outlines an opportunity for the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to secure a significant Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) grant to address four interrelated projects located on the north shore of Alpha Lake including: a replacement sanitary sewer service, a new Valley Trail segment and two improved public park and lake access points.

☐ Information Report ☒ Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

The UBCM's SPF is an application-based program available to local governments and other recipients outside of the Metro Vancouver Regional District. It is intended to support infrastructure and capacity building projects that are either large in scale, regional in impact or innovative, and align with the SPF's objectives of productivity and economic growth, a clean environment and strong cities and communities.

The SPF program can contribute a maximum of 100% of the cost of eligible activities to a maximum of \$6 million. Project categories include active transportation, wastewater and infrastructure related to

tourism, culture and recreation. The deadline for applications is June 30, 2022, and a Council resolution indicating support for the proposed activities and willingness to provide overall grant management is required.

After reviewing sufficiently advanced capital projects it was determined that four interrelated municipal projects bundled together as one overall project would make an ideal grant submission. These projects have been in planning stages and had been segmented for ease of delivery, but ultimately comprise one comprehensive project. The four segmented projects are:

- Construction of 950 m of a new Valley Trail segment between Alta Lake Road and Alpha Lake Park;
- Improved public park and lake access at Pine Point Park;
- Development of a new public park with lake access at the west shore of Alpha Lake; and
- Construction of 980 m of a new sanitary sewer force main traversing the same alignment as the proposed Valley Trail.

Each of these initiatives is discussed in greater detail below. The total value of all four components is estimated to be \$6,274,600 and includes a 15% allowance for professional fees and permitting.

## **Analysis**

### **Valley Trail**

The Valley Trail network serves to provide convenient and safe active transportation options for the community. It is a tourism and recreation asset and aligns with a wide cross section of RMOW goals. With this in mind, construction of this important segment between Alta Lake Road and Alpha Lake Park would provide a missing link between the recently completed Millar Creek Valley Trail segment and the remainder of the network. Further, the addition of this link would result in the Function Junction and Creekside neighbourhoods being linked with a safe and convenient Valley Trail segment, and further enhance service to the growing Cheakamus Crossing neighbourhood.

To help guide the planning of these connections, in 2020 the RMOW retained ISL Engineering (ISL) to explore the feasibility, environmental considerations, constructability, and projected costs of eight potential approaches to Valley Trail alignment navigating Alpha Lake, and to recommend one. ISL considered alignments on both the north and south sides of Alpha Lake, as well as options containing segments of floating trail, elevated boardwalks, lake infill, and both level and grade-separated railway crossing opportunities. The ISL study acknowledges that the work to date represents a preliminary environmental assessment only, and that a detailed environmental investigation is required to confirm potential impacts, outcomes and permitting requirements of the preferred alignment.

The identified preferred alignment starts where the newly constructed Millar Creek Valley Trail terminates at Alta Lake Road, continues eastwards parallel to the south side of the existing CN Railway tracks and across private strata property. The trail alignment then parallels the north shore of Alta Lake via a floating dock system before meandering through the currently undeveloped Pine Point Park. From Pine Point Park, the Valley Trail would continue eastwards, paralleling the municipally owned shoreline of Alpha Lake along an existing utility right-of-way and informal trail, eventually connecting to the existing Valley Trail terminus in Alpha Lake Park.

The preferred alignment is direct and relatively level, thus offering the greatest likelihood of public uptake when compared to other alignment options that are either longer, more circuitous, or involve significant elevation gains. This alignment does not cross the railway, and it addresses existing

trespass patterns along the CN Rail Right of Way, the existing private railway crossing and associated driveway and portions of Old Gravel Road.

The proposed floating portion of Valley Trail would be a new and unique element in Whistler. This would offer additional lake access opportunities and minimize environmental and visual impacts when compared to other potential options including boardwalk and lake infill.

As a floating trail the surface panels would be secured in place in the lake by weighted tie-downs or piles, and would include railings. This trail would remain open for winter use and would be designed to accommodate small snow clearing and maintenance equipment. Precedent examples successfully exist in other jurisdictions, including lake locations with winter freeze-thaw cycles.

A short portion of the preferred alignment traverses lands that are privately held. The RMOW has initiated discussions with the land owners and will continue to advance this effort. Should public access across the privately held property not be possible, a secondary alignment adjacent to this property is feasible.

The preferred alignment has a Class C (+/- 35%) estimated capital construction costs of \$4,040,550 in 2021 dollars. Other alignment options ranged in cost from \$3,343,200 to \$9,888,746. These figures exclude professional fees and permitting costs, which for the purposes of the grant application are estimated at a further 15%.

#### Pine Point Park Improvements

Pine Point Park is a municipally owned lake shore park bordered by Alpha Lake and the Canadian National (CN) railway that is zoned "Leisure Park One". It is a naturally forested 1.9 hectare space possessing an engaging lakeshore and a series of rocky highland outcrops with dramatic views. It is not well known to the public and is currently undeveloped apart from several existing worn pedestrian routes to the lake shore and viewpoints.

Public access to this park will be substantially improved with the proposed development of the Valley Trail, providing new opportunities for waterfront access and expanding use of this underutilized park asset. Modest park development will be required in order to maintain, environmental and user experiential values, and the privacy of nearby private landowners.

Park development is envisioned to include construction of 400 metres of new, non-motorized gravel surface trails, construction of a modest viewing deck at the park's high point, and placement of typical Whistler municipal park amenities such as wayfinding and regulation signage, picnic tables, benches, stand up paddleboard and canoe/kayak racks, a pit toilet style washroom, waste collection facilities, and public swim docks on the Alpha Lake foreshore. The gravel surfaced trails would provide access between the proposed Valley Trail and the swim docks and viewing platform. A low wood "split rail" type of fence would be used where necessary to contain users and protect environmentally sensitive areas and nearby resident privacy.

A Class C (+/- 35%) capital construction cost estimate of \$117,248 in 2021 dollars has been calculated to construct the stated elements. This figure excludes professional fees and permitting costs, which for the purposes of the grant application are estimated at a further 15%.

Park specific vehicle parking would not to be provided. Users would be expected and encouraged to use the Valley Trail to access the park on foot or by bike.

The proposed improvements are consistent with the current zoning designation.

### Miller Creek Lands

Efforts to secure public access over Crown and private lands on the west shore of Alpha Lake have been underway for some time. Initially delayed by the pandemic and then the Land Use Contract termination process, the RMOW expects to successfully secure the Crown lands portion in 2022. The process for securing access across private lands is expected to benefit from previously-established and positive working relationships in the coming year.

Assuming public access is secured, the RMOW would seek to construct the connecting Valley Trail segment and develop a small lakefront park containing a small lawn area with picnic tables, benches, stand up paddleboard and canoe/kayak racks, a pit toilet style washroom, waste collection facilities, public swim docks and wayfinding and regulation signage. A low wood “split rail” type of fence would be used to contain users and protect environmentally sensitive areas.

The stated improvements have a Class C (+/- 35%) estimated capital construction cost of \$200,826 in 2021 dollars. This figure excludes professional fees and permitting costs, which for the purposes of the grant application are estimated at a further 15%. Costs to secure the public access are excluded from the capital construction value and are ineligible grant expenses.

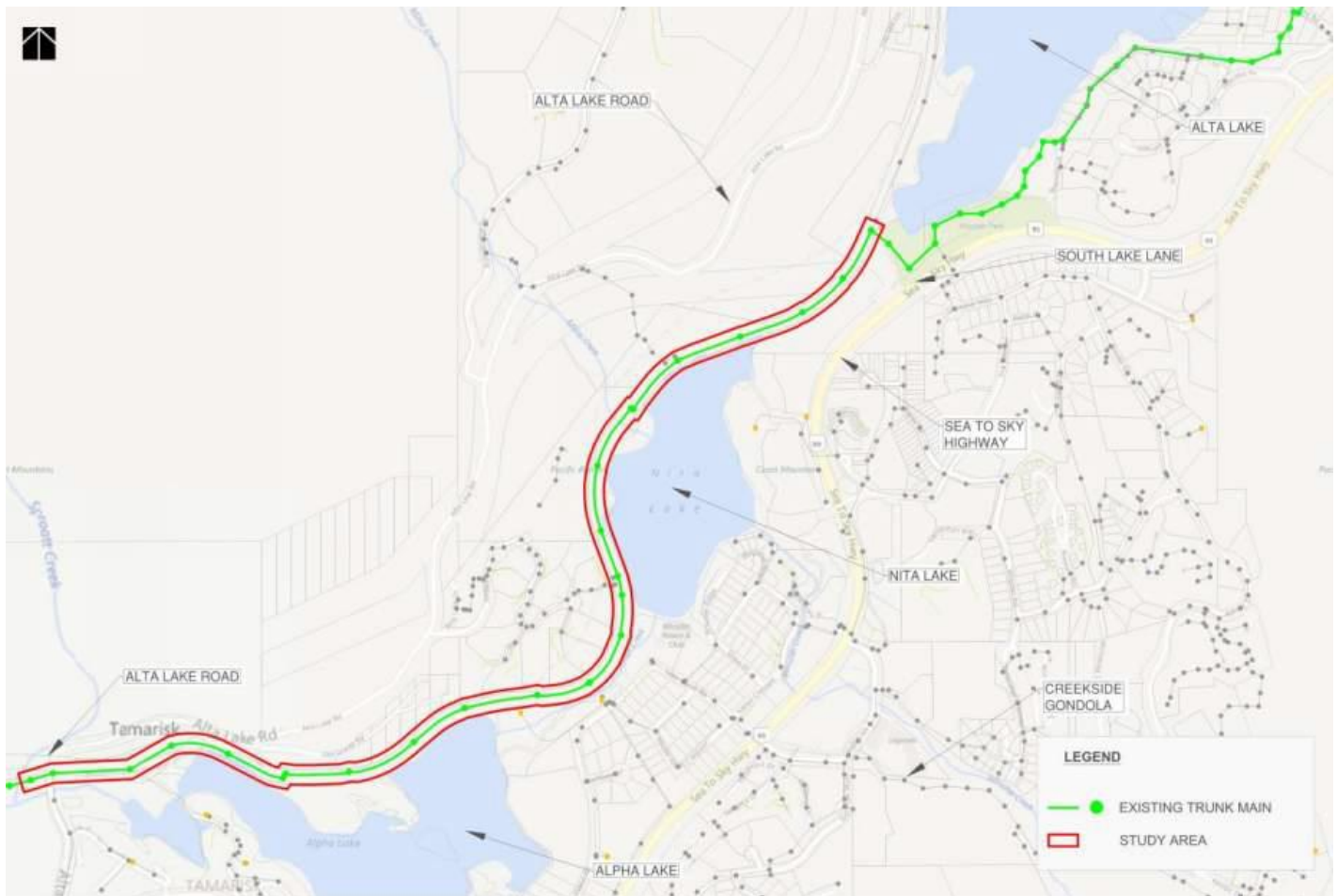
If it is not possible to secure public access across the privately held lands then the scope of development would be reduced to the Valley Trail and wayfinding only and be located completely upon private Crown Lands.

In either situation, park specific vehicle parking would not to be provided. Users would be expected to use the Valley Trail to access the park and lake on foot or by bike. On street parking signage along Alta Lake Road may be necessary to manage parking demands.

### Sanitary Sewer Connection

The RMOW Infrastructure Services division retained ISL in 2018 to evaluate the accessibility of the sanitary trunk sewer main between Village Gate Boulevard and the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP). That study found that many sections of the existing trunk main were nearly inaccessible, including some that lie within the CN Rail Right of Way (ROW). This condition restricts access for routine maintenance, inspection, repairs and upgrades. In addition to the access issues, the existing trunk sewer also has several sections where high flow events have reached the capacity of the sewer and upgrades will be required over the next few years.

ISL’s 2018 study focused on the trunk sewer from approximately South Lake Lane to Alta Lake Road as shown on the Figure below.



Correcting the challenges the current sewer alignment presents is an important goal to improve access for routine maintenance, inspection, repairs and upgrades. Performing any of these activities within the CN Rail ROW requires planning months in advance, getting agreement from CN Rail, and substantial additional costs for a crew from CN Rail to be onsite during the work. In developing this current plan, staff sought to ensure alignment of a new sanitary sewer main could be installed along the proposed extension of the Valley Trail. The Valley Trail alignment that has been contemplated lends itself to construct a section of forcemain as part of the project. This would be one piece of the infrastructure required to eventually enable the abandonment of the trunk sewer in the CN Rail ROW.

This UBCM Grant presents the opportunity to align significant priorities across various divisions and deliver a project that results in positive outcomes for the entire community. ISL has proposed the new Valley Trail alignment be utilized to install a 450 mm force main that in future phases of infrastructure upgrades would carry flows from an upgraded sanitary lift station in the Whistler Creekside neighbourhood. In the near term this reduces the catchment area and relieves capacity in the section of trunk sewer in the section of CN Rail ROW on the northern edge of Alpha Lake and is a key component of the overall plan to establish a new sewer trunk main away from the railway.

A Class C (+/- 35%) capital construction cost estimate of \$1,097,550 has been calculated to construct 980 m of forcemain within the proposed new Valley Trail alignment. This figure excludes professional fees and permitting costs, which for the purposes of the grant application are estimated at a further 15%.

### Timing

Development Permit submissions and other agency approvals necessary to the Valley Trail and Pine Point Park project are expected to be in place late in 2022. Construction work could commence in 2023 following all approvals.

Design details of both this section of sanitary sewer forcemain and the overall plan to locate the trunk sewer away from the CN Rail ROW will also be developed in 2022 in order to align timing with the Valley Trail component.

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## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

The Valley Trail and park components outlined in this report are consistent with the vision, goals and objectives of the 2015 Recreation and Leisure Master Plan.

The Valley Trail component outlined in this report is consistent with the Climate Action “Big Moves” Strategy number one to “move beyond the car.” While the Valley Trail is first and foremost a recreational multi use trail, the provision of a connected, direct and relatively level Valley Trail network that spans the community has proven to be an excellent way of encouraging responsible active transportation in daily life. The segment outlined in this report serves to eliminate a gap in the existing Valley Trail network that is currently being solved through public trespass. The segment would also serve to connect existing and growing neighbourhoods with resort community destinations and centres of employment.

### Corporate Plan

The RMOW Corporate Plan is updated annually and articulates strategic direction for the organization. This section identifies how this report links to the plan.

### Council Focus Areas

☒ Community Balance

*Effectively **balance resort and community needs** through deliberate planning, partnerships and investment*

☒ Climate Action

*Provide leadership to **accelerate climate action and environmental performance** across the community*

☐ Housing

*Advance strategic and innovative initiatives to enable and **deliver additional employee housing***

☐ Pandemic Recovery

*Leadership and support for **community and tourism recovery and sustainability** – priority focuses are where recovery needs intersect with other Council focus areas*

## Corporate Goals

- ☒ Community character and mountain culture is reflected in municipal initiatives
- ☒ Municipal decision-making supports the effective stewardship of natural assets and ecological function
- ☒ Corporate policies and operations ensure continuous excellence in infrastructure, facility and program management
- ☒ A high level of accountability, transparency and community engagement is maintained
- ☒ Corporate financial health is optimized to ensure long-term community success
- ☒ A vibrant local economy and safe, resilient resort community is effectively reinforced by organizational activities
- ☐ Pandemic recovery

## Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

### OUR COMMUNITY VISION – PREAMBLE

- *We understand our fundamental dependence on the environment – for our health and well-being, and for the success of our tourism-based economy.*

VISION STATEMENT: *A place where our community thrives, nature is protected and guests are inspired* – and specifically relevant are the following Vision Characteristics:

- *2. LANDSCAPE: Natural areas are never far from sight and reach; they are the predominant component of our mountain landscape, core to our mountain culture and the basis of our outstanding recreation offerings.*
- *3. BALANCE: Community life and resort visitation are balanced, both occurring within the carrying capacity of our developed and natural environments.*
- *5. RESPECT: We understand, respect and steward natural areas as the foundation of our community, our tourism-based economy and overall human health.*
- *7. ACCESS: Where natural areas are accessed and enjoyed for recreation and overall wellbeing, we do so in a responsible way.*
- *17. EXPERIENCE: Whistler offers diverse, year-round and authentic experiences that offer exceptional value and sustain visitation.*

## CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC VIABILITY

- 6.1.1.3. *POLICY Pursue and maximize senior government contributions in funding municipal infrastructure.*

## CHAPTER: 8 HEALTH, SAFETY AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

- 8.1. *GOAL Promote, encourage and support initiatives that strengthen the community's sense of place and sense of belonging.*
- 8.1.2. *OBJECTIVE Promote and support connections to the natural environment.*
  - 8.1.2.1. *POLICY Create and promote ways for all community members to have access to the natural environment.*
- 8.8. *GOAL Ensure Whistler is an inclusive and accessible resort community.*
  - 8.8.2. *OBJECTIVE Create a positive resort experience for people of all ages and abilities.*

## CHAPTER 9 LEARNING, CULTURE AND RECREATION

- 9.3.2. *OBJECTIVE Whistler's recreation and leisure system contributes to the social wellbeing of residents and visitors.*
  - 9.3.2.1. *POLICY Recognize that recreation and leisure provide opportunities for social interaction and add social value to our community, thus building upon our sense of belonging to this place.*
- 9.4 *GOAL Achieve a balance between user needs, the natural environment and user experiences in providing recreational opportunities.*
- 9.5 *GOAL Continue to maintain, improve and provide a diverse variety of high quality and affordable recreation and leisure amenities and experiences.*
  - 9.5.4. *OBJECTIVE Ensure that recreational opportunities highlight Whistler's natural environment and cultural history.*
- 9.8 *GOAL Continue to acquire lands to maintain a sense of place and to benefit the public.*

## CHAPTER 11 TRANSPORTATION

- 11.1 *GOAL Provide a quality travel experience for all visitors, employees and residents, and promote a culture of safety and accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.*
- 11.4 *GOAL Support the increased use of preferred modes of transportation for all travel purposes to reduce dependence on private motor vehicles.*
- 11.7 *GOAL Ensure the transportation system respects Whistler's natural environment, minimizes climate impacts and improves the livability of the resort community.*

## CHAPTER 12 INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 12.2 of the OCP is that Whistler's sewer systems meet all applicable standards and are maintained in a manner that is cost-effective, ensures reliability and minimizes or eliminates environmental impacts. This project would both help ensure reliability and improve the cost effectiveness of our sewer maintenance program.

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## BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The UBCM'S SPF application represents an opportunity to pursue significant external funding to realize the project components outlined in this report. This grant application demonstrates staff's ongoing commitment to optimizing external funding opportunities to deliver RMOW priorities. The total value of the grant application is \$6,274,600 and includes a 15% allowance for professional fees and permitting.

Should partial funding be received, staff would consider which inter-related projects could be delivered in independence and where supplementary funding would be required to achieve the outlined goals.

Additional funding required for portions of the plan to relocate the sanitary trunk sewer away from the railway alignment that are outside the scope of this project will be funded out of the RMOW's sewer reserve funds.

Provision of the four new elements discussed in this report would increase operating costs to the RMOW. Each element is relatively small within the larger municipal asset inventory and budget framework.

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## LIL'WAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lil'wat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

There are no specific considerations to include in this report.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☒ Inform    ☐ Consult    ☐ Involve    ☐ Collaborate    ☐ Empower

Comment(s):

This project aligns with municipal policies and the active transportation priorities of the Transportation Advisory Group. In addition this work is consistent with the contemplated priorities of the Draft Parks Masterplan. Submission of a grant application for the Alpha Lakes Projects outlined in this report was supported in principle by members of the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee at their regular meeting of June 9, 2022.

As this project advances, further opportunities to inform the public and stakeholders will occur.

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## REFERENCES

Appendix A – UBCM Strategic Priorities Fund Program Guide

## Appendix B – Valley Trail and park development preliminary concept drawings

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### **SUMMARY**

This report seeks Council authorization for staff to apply to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Strategic Priorities Fund for external grant funds to deliver four interrelated recreational, active transportation and wastewater infrastructure projects in and around Alpha Lake. It further requests Council's approval to oversee the grant management as required by the grant program guide.

The four interrelated projects support multiple goals within the RMOW's OCP, the Climate Action "Big Moves" Strategy, the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan, and the emerging Active Transportation Plan.

The grant application represents no risk or commitment to the RMOW. The deadline for applications is June 30, 2022.

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### **SIGN-OFFS**

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