



RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: March 19, 2024. **REPORT:** 24-029
FROM: Climate Action, Planning and Development **FILE:** 3020
SUBJECT: ALPHA LAKE VALLEY TRAIL - CROWN LAND USE TENURE APPLICATION

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council endorse and authorize staff to submit the Alpha Lake Valley Trail Crown Land Use Tenure applications as described in Appendix A attached to Administrative Report No. 24-029.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report's purpose is to obtain Council support for a Crown Land Use Tenure application to the province allowing for design and delivery of the proposed future Alpha Lake Valley Trail along the north edge of Alpha Lake.

Information Report Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

The Resort Municipality of Whistler's (RMOW) Valley Trail network is a paved, non-motorized multi-use trail and boardwalk network of ~50 km in length connecting municipal neighbourhoods, lakes, viewpoints, municipal parks and commercial areas. It is one of Whistler's most celebrated amenities attracting and inspiring visitors around the world. A continuous and efficient connectivity of the network serves both recreation and active transportation goals of the resort community.

With this in mind, the Parks Planning Department intends to construct a critical Valley Trail segment between Alta Lake Rd and Alpha Lake Park, connecting to the new Millar Creek Valley Trail and ultimately linking Function Junction to Creekside. Alignment option evaluations, conceptual designs and cost estimates commenced in 2021 and are expected to result in a fully permitted and "shovel ready" project in 2025 or 2026. This project is currently in the feasibility and concept design phase.

Analysis

One of the first planning steps for this project was to determine the most optimal alignment between the fixed end points of Alta Lake Road at the railway crossing and Alpha Lake Park. An Alignment Options Report was commissioned by ISL Engineering and Consultants (ISL Report) in 2022 which generated four primary alignment options. Alignment options were informed by geotechnical investigations, legal survey, tree survey, bathometric survey, a preliminary desktop environmental assessment, observation of current use patterns and behaviour, environmental impacts, trespass considerations, safety, view impacts and costs. Engagement with multiple industry and marketplace experts to provide perspective and constructability analysis was also undertaken.

The ISL Report identified a preferred Valley Trail alignment along the north edge of Alpha Lake and Pine Point Park. This alignment would require a floating or fixed boardwalk upon Alpha Lake for a portion of the alignment due to constraints in topography and the proximity of the CN rail right of way and the Alta Lake Road right of way.

To further test the viability of this alignment, a detailed field based Environmental Impact Study and an archaeological information request were completed.

The reports generated by this work have been shared internally for review, discussion and comment. Field walks with relevant municipal staff and members of the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee to discuss the pros, cons and challenges of the various alignment options were conducted in 2023. This work confirmed that the preferred alignment identified in the ISL Report to be the option that best balances environmental impacts, usability, and cost.

The preferred alignment's boardwalk or floating portion upon Alpha Lake would require a Crown Land Use Tenure, which in turn requires a supporting Council resolution to accompany the application. Doing so commences the provincial review and permitting process.

To be clear, if granted, a Crown Land Use Tenure does not commit the RMOW to construction, but rather would allow construction to occur if and when the construction phase is approved.

Staff are also actively engaged in other negotiations and permitting processes to ensure viability of the recommended alignment prior to entering the next phase of the project. This includes CN Rail, Transport Canada, BC Hydro, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Forest Lands Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, and current Strata Land ownership. Crown Land Use Tenures can take one to three years to process.

With supportive feedback and permits from the various external agencies, the community engagement, detailed design and costing phase would commence, and a more solid project delivery timeline would be established.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

June 21, 2022 - [Administrative Report No. 22-090](#) UBCM Grant Application– Alpha Lake Projects Report

Council endorsed staff's recommendation to submit a grant application to the UBCM for design and construction funding for the same Valley Trail alignment between Alta Lake Road and Alpha Lake. The ISL Report mentioned here formed the basis of this application, which was ultimately unsuccessful.

May 10, 2022 - [Administrative Report No. 22-067](#) Lakes Management Options Report

Council endorsed staff's recommendation to submit several Foreshore Licence applications throughout the Municipality for park use and lake management purposes.

Big Moves Climate Action Strategy

Provision of a Valley Trail as described in this report would connect the recently completed Millar Creek Valley Trail (from Function Junction and also serving Cheakamus Crossing) to Pine Point and Alpha Lake Parks with the remainder of the network. This aligns with the Big Moves strategy to "move beyond the car by enabling more active transportation". Valley Trail network connectivity is also supported in the emerging Active Transportation Plan.

Recreation and Leisure Master Plan

This 2015 plan identifies the subject Valley Trail segment in Schedule 5 "Valley Trail Network Gaps." Elsewhere in the Plan it is proposed to address this gap.

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. It contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priorities

Housing

Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing

Climate Action

Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan

Community Engagement

Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW

Smart Tourism

Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure

Not Applicable

Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs

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.

This Valley Trail segment is identified in Whistler's OCP in Schedule E-1 "Transportation Cycling Network Plan", E-2 "Recreation Trails Plan" and E-3 "Transportation Network Plan." The actions described in this report are aligned with and strategically move us toward our community vision.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The cost for the Crown Land Use Tenure application is \$250 x 3 applications for a total of \$750 which will be funded by the existing project P115 Alpha Lakes Projects.

LÍLWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lílwat 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.

An information report received from the Archeological Branch of BC has indicated no known records of archeological sites in the subject area. In addition to the provincial referral process which shares all Crown Land applications with relevant First Nations, the Parks Planning Department has recently shared preliminary project information to the Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation and intends to submit a full referral to each Nation in the immediate future.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

The current project feasibility and concept phase will conclude with confirmation of a number of statutory right of way agreements, compatible use agreements, Crown Land Use Tenure agreements, a property acquisition and First Nation comment.

The next phase of the project will provide an opportunity to inform and consult with the community through various engagement channels including the potential for scheduled site walk information sessions with staff.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – Application Areas

SUMMARY

This report requests Council support for submission of a Crown Land Use Tenure application to the Province of BC to initiate provincial review of the lands/water bodies required for the potential construction of a segment of the Valley Trail along the north edge of Alpha Lake. Council support for the application is necessary as one of the final steps in the feasibility and concept design phase of this project.

In support of this request, project information has been provided in Appendix A, including how the north edge of Alpha Lake alignment was determined as the preferred option for Valley Trail extension.

SIGN-OFFS

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