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**REPORT TO ELECTORAL AREA SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2012**

SUBJECT **DEVELOPMENT OF A CYCLING AND PEDESTRIAN TRAIL PLAN FOR THE SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS**

ISSUE

The Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) Economic Development Commission has identified several initiatives for enhancing the social, environmental and economic sustainability of the SGI. One of the immediate priorities is to develop a cycling and pedestrian trail plan.

BACKGROUND

At its April 2012 meeting, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board established the Southern Gulf Islands Community Economic Development Commission (SGI-CEDC). The Commission held its inaugural meeting on September 18, 2012 and examined several initiatives to stimulate community and economic development, including a tourism/active transportation development proposal entitled "*Experience the Gulf Islands*" (proposal provided under separate cover).

This proposal identifies an SGI-wide cycling and pedestrian trail system connected with Salt Spring Island, Vancouver Island, and the Mainland as a key element. To guide this trail development, a plan is required and could be developed with support from the CRD.

Administratively, oversight of SGI cycling and pedestrian trail plan development fits within the Parks and Community Services mandate. This initiative is supported in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan, and is intended to be a collaborative effort with Parks Canada, the SGI Parks and Recreation Commissions, CRD Regional Planning and Regional Parks, and the Islands Trust. Funding to develop this plan, estimated at \$60,000, could be sourced from the SGI's portion of the Gas Tax Community Works Fund (CWF).

Development of a cycling and pedestrian trail plan is considered an eligible project for Gas Tax funding under the "*capacity building*" category of the Gas Tax Agreement. The SGI Electoral Area Director supports the allocation of \$60,000 from SGI's portion of the Gas Tax CWF for this project.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the CRD Board authorize development of a cycling and pedestrian trail plan for the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) with a funding contribution of \$60,000 from the SGI portion of the Gas Tax Community Works Fund.
2. That Parks and Community Services determine an alternative source of funds for developing the cycling and pedestrian trail plan for the Southern Gulf Islands.

IMPLICATIONS

Administrative

Development of a cycling and pedestrian trail plan aligns with the SGI-CEDC's objective of enhancing the SGI's social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This initiative falls under the CRD Parks and Community Services mandate, and it is supported in the CRD Regional Parks Strategic Plan.

Financial

Funds for development of the cycling and pedestrian trail plan are available in the SGI's portion of the Gas Tax CWF. These funds can be used to cover the grant-eligible costs of the project, such as the professional planner required to develop the plan. CRD Regional Parks will provide administrative oversight of the project; this is a non-grantable expense.

Over the long-term, implementation of the SGI trail plan could involve acquisition, capital and ongoing operation/maintenance costs. These costs would have to be considered in future Regional Parks' budget which will be subject to CRD Board approval.

CONCLUSION

At its inaugural meeting in September, 2012, the newly formed SGI-CEDC examined several community and economic development initiatives. One of these, entitled "*Experience the Gulf Islands*" identifies the need for an SGI-wide cycling and pedestrian trail system.

Development of a cycling and pedestrian trail plan is a follow-up action through which the CRD can lend support to the SGI-CEDC in implementing the "*Experience the Gulf Islands*" vision and proposal. Oversight of the cycling and pedestrian trail plan development fits within the Parks and Community Services mandate, and this initiative is supported in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan. Funding for the grant-eligible expenses of the project can be sourced from the SGI's portion of the Gas Tax CWF; Regional Parks could provide support to manage the project; this expense would be non-grantable. Resources for plan implementation in the future will be subject to CRD Board approval.

The SGI Electoral Area Director supports the allocation of \$60,000 from SGI's portion of the Gas Tax CWF for this project.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Electoral Area Services Committee recommends to the CRD Board:

1. That the CRD Board authorize the development of a cycling and pedestrian trail plan for the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) with a funding contribution of \$60,000 from the SGI portion of the Gas Tax Community Works Fund.

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