



MEDIA RELEASE

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FUNDS ADD MOMENTUM TO SICAMOUS-TO-ARMSTRONG RAIL TRAIL PROJECT

Plans for the development of a non-motorized trail connection from Sicamous to Armstrong are taking a leap forward with the announcement of a \$500,000 BC Rural Dividend Grant to advance the project to the design phase.

The Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSR D), the Splatšín First Nation and the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) share a common vision for the recreational greenway, which would be a significant regional asset both for residents and visitors to enjoy. The proposed 50-kilometre trail would run along the west side of Mara Lake, through portions of the rail corridor previously purchased by Splatšín, and span the communities of Sicamous, Grindrod, Enderby, Spallumcheen and Armstrong.

The CSR D, Splatšín and the RDNO gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia in advancing the project.

Funding from this grant will be used to take the next steps. This includes conducting environmental impact assessments, First Nations archeological and cultural reviews, consulting with the agricultural community and developing engineering designs. Also in the works are updating lease, dock and access agreements with adjacent property owners, as well as planning work involving the regional districts, municipalities and provincial ministries.

The financial contribution will also allow for the hiring of a project manager, who will be tasked with engaging with professional consulting services and initiating public engagement into the trail design.

The BC Rural Dividend Program is designed to fund projects which support economic development and diversification in rural communities.

"I'm ecstatic," says CSR D Board Chair and Electoral Area E Director Rhona Martin. "This is what we need. This will build the foundation for moving this project forward. We have a great team ready to go and I'm just thrilled the BC Rural Dividend Program saw fit to recognize the tremendous value this project will bring to our rural communities."



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In order to secure this BC Rural Dividend Fund grant, a funding commitment was also required from grant applicants. In August 2018, the CSR D Board approved a commitment of \$168,000 from the Sicamous and Area E Economic Opportunity Fund. The District of Sicamous funded the remaining \$168,000 contribution. This local government seed money allowed the \$500,000 application to proceed to the BC Rural Dividend Program.

"This project is about connecting communities. It's more than just the actual trail, but also in building the economic and tourism opportunities that will be a driver for the entire region. This grant is in total recognition of that... We are grateful for what this grant will do," says Sicamous Mayor and CSR D Director Terry Rysz.

"What I'd also like to recognize is the spirit of collaboration here. There's been financial support from many local governments and a serious amount of energy put in because we know what an opportunity this is for all of us," he adds.

At this time, additional grant applications of approximately \$13 million have been made to federal government programs, with the outcomes still pending.

Once the design and planning has been completed, the project would be ready to move to the development and construction phase. This, however, remains dependent on future funding from the provincial and federal governments. If the federal grant application is successful, construction could start in 2020 and take approximately two years to complete.

At this time, the trail remains closed to the public.

The next meeting of the Sicamous-to-Armstrong Rail Trail Corridor Interjurisdictional Governance Advisory Committee will be May 17, 2019 at the CSR D Boardroom, 555 Harbourfront Drive, Salmon Arm.

For further information, please contact Tracy Hughes, CSR D Communications Coordinator at 250.833.5963 or toll-free at 1.888.248.2773 or email Thughes@csrd.bc.ca.