

**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: October 21, 2025
FROM: Parks Planning
SUBJECT: RECREATION TRAILS STRATEGY UPDATE

REPORT: 25-085
FILE: 0620-20

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the updated Resort Municipality of Whistler Recreation Trails Strategy, attached as Appendix A to Administrative Report No. 25-085.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report presents the updated Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) Recreation Trails Strategy (RTS) for Council's endorsement.

☐ Information Report ☒ Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

The RMOW undertook development of the RTS in response to a variety of issues. The RTS is intended as a comprehensive, forward-looking framework designed to guide the planning, development, management and stewardship of Whistler's non-motorized recreational trail network. Rooted in respect for the unceded territories of the Lílwat Nation and the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, the RTS reflects a commitment to reconciliation, environmental sustainability, community well-being and economic vitality.

A draft version of the RTS was presented to the Committee of the Whole (COTW) at the [June 24, 2025 COTW Meeting](#). Council endorsed the RTS at their [July 08, 2025 Regular Council Meeting](#). Staff now present an updated RTS (Appendix A) which includes minor edits and inclusion of a series of trail maps identifying trails by authorization status, maintenance responsibility and relative land ownership and management.

Analysis

The RTS provides strategic direction for managing Whistler's extensive 400+ kilometre trail network, including authorized and unauthorized trails, trail-related amenities and access infrastructure. It excludes motorized trails (except for trials motorcycles) and focuses on spring, summer and fall use.

The RTS excludes the Whistler Blackcomb Bike Park, Garibaldi Provincial Park and Whistler Olympic Park. The RTS aligns with the Official Community Plan (OCP) and the [2020 Climate Action Big Moves Strategy](#), and lays the groundwork for a future Comprehensive Trails Plan (CTP).

The RTS envisions a trail network that connects people to place, supports health and well-being, and respects the cultural and ecological integrity of the land. Key objectives include:

- Advancing reconciliation with First Nations;
- Protecting sensitive ecosystems and cultural sites;
- Supporting diverse user experiences and accessibility;
- Enhancing Whistler's tourism-based economy; and
- Promoting sustainable funding and responsible trail planning and use.

The RTS outlines high-level direction across six key areas:

- **Trail Management and Operations:** Prioritize reinvestment in existing infrastructure, secure sustainable funding and address unauthorized trail construction through education, enforcement and collaboration.
- **Access and Staging:** Implement new guidelines for trail access and staging areas to support active transportation, reduce vehicle dependency and minimize neighbourhood impacts.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Apply the newly developed Environmentally Responsible Trail Planning (ERTP) guidelines to mitigate ecological impacts and preserve biodiversity.
- **Trail Planning and Development:** Emphasize environmentally responsible trail planning, avoid sensitive habitats, consider trail suitability and integrate Indigenous knowledge and values into all planning processes.
- **Commercial and Event Use:** Develop policies to manage growing commercial and event-related trail use, ensuring alignment with environmental and cultural values.
- **Monitoring and Communication:** Improve trail monitoring, user education and inter-agency coordination to manage trail use and protect sensitive areas.

The RTS contains tools applicable to municipal lands and unceded lands currently managed by the provincial government. These following tools are all included as appendices to the RTS. Note that Appendix F is a new appendix that was not included in the June 24, 2025 COTW Report. This appendix is a series of maps identifying trail authorization status, maintenance responsibility and land ownership and management. The updated RTS contains the following appendices:

- Appendix A: Evolving Terminology (reconciliation);
- Appendix B: ERTTP Tool;
- Appendix C: Trail Access and Staging Guidelines;
- Appendix D: Trail Review and Approval Process Flowcharts;
- Appendix E: Trail Network Areas Suitability Analysis and Recommendations; and
- Appendix F: Trail Status, Maintenance Responsibility, and Land Ownership Maps.

The RTS is a living document evolving with community needs, environmental conditions, and cultural insights.

Anticipated next steps include:

- deepening relationships with Indigenous communities and trail interest groups;
- updating trail standards to reflect inclusive and sustainable practices;
- exploring long-term funding models and capacity studies; and
- developing a CTP.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

[June 11, 2024, COTW Report Parks Planning Park, Valley Trail and Related Strategies Updates](#): the RTS was presented to the COTW in conjunction with a multi-project Parks Planning Department Update.

[June 24, 2025, COTW Report No. W25-009: Recreation Trails Strategy](#)

[July 8, 2025, Consideration of the COTW Recommendation](#): Council endorsed the RTS, as recommended at the June 24, 2025, COTW Meeting.

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. The Strategic Plan 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 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. The RTS supports the OCP Vision Statement: *Whistler: A place where our community thrives, nature is protected, and guests are inspired*. More specifically the RTS is primarily influenced by the goals of these chapters:

Chapter 7: Natural Environment

Goal 7.1.: Whistler's sensitive ecosystems, wildlife, habitat and biodiversity are protected, managed and restored.

Chapter 9: Learning, Culture and Recreation

Goal 9.3.: Continually reaffirm our sense of place as the foundation to Whistler's recreation and leisure experience.

Goal 9.4.: Achieve a balance between user needs, the natural environment and user experiences in providing recreational opportunities.

Goal 9.5.: Continue to work collaboratively with partner organizations to provide quality recreation and leisure amenities and experiences.

Goal 9.7.: Strategically plan, engage, design and monitor significant recreation and leisure initiatives.

Goal 9.9.: Balance the use of public amenities for commercial and event use with the needs of residents and guests

Chapter 10: Climate Action and Energy

Goal 10.2.: Substantially reduce GHG emissions from vehicles and transportation.

Chapter 11: Transportation

Goal 11.2.: Integrate the transportation system with land use planning to minimize the need for travel by motor vehicle.

Goal 11.4.: Support the increased use of preferred modes of transportation for all travel purposes to reduce dependence on private motor vehicles.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

At present there are no immediate implications to the RMOW Five-Year Financial Plan.

An important intent of the RTS is to understand financial realities and identify the need to reinvest in municipal assets to maintain environmental and experiential values. Three of the four next steps identified in the analysis section can be accommodated within existing staff work programs and resources as priorities permit. Developing a future CTP may likely require external resources and will be budgeted for in a future Capital Budget process, again as priorities permit.

LÍL'WAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Líl'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 planning on unceded territories, as currently managed by the provincial government; achieve mutual objectives and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

Referrals to the Líl'wat Nation and the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* were submitted early in the RTS project's timeline. Over the course of the RTS project there has been ongoing discussion with both the Líl'wat Nation and the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw*, and staff made an in-person presentation to the Líl'wat Nation's Lands and Resources Committee on January 10, 2024. As a strategy document, the RTS is important in setting the tone of approach for future trail planning work.

Of note, the Lílwat Nation and the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw clearly articulated objection to the practice of unauthorized trail construction. This practice is inconsistent with reconciliation and is undermining the credibility of the activities for which the trails are built. Recommendations within the RTS specifically seek to respond to this topic and include the application of municipal bylaws and fines for infractions occurring on municipally controlled lands (e.g., Parkhurst, Lost Lake Park) as well as consideration for the redirection of municipal funded trail maintenance and operations budgets and grants to decommissioning and revegetating unauthorized trails on unceded lands, as currently managed by the provincial government.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☐ Inform ☐ Consult ☒ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

As noted above, development of the RTS included three rounds of public engagement with online information sessions, Engage Whistler online surveys, and in-person pop-up booths. Over 1,700 people participated in these events. Development of the RTS also included presentations, questions and discussions at several Recreation and Leisure Advisory Select Committee of Council (now part of the Smart Tourism Select Committee of Council) and the Trail Planning Working Group meetings. Direct outreach was undertaken with the Whistler Off Road Cycling Association.

No additional feedback has been received following the June 24, 2025, COTW presentation.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – Recreation Trails Strategy, September 2025 (with RTS appendices)

SUMMARY

The RTS is a forward-looking plan developed by the RMOW to guide the management of more than 400 kilometres of the non-motorized trail network for which Whistler is widely known.

Grounded in reconciliation with the Lílwat Nation and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, the RTS emphasizes environmental protection, inclusive access and community well-being. It outlines strategic priorities in trail operations, commercial use, access, planning and stewardship, while addressing unauthorized trail construction through education, enforcement and potential reallocation of funding and fines. The RTS supports Whistler's OCP and climate action goals, promoting active transportation and reduced vehicle dependency.

Developed through extensive public engagement, the RTS sets the foundation for future initiatives, including a deepening relationship with Indigenous communities, updated trail standards, long-term funding considerations and potentially a future CTP.

As a living document, the RTS aims to evolve with community needs, environmental conditions and cultural insights.

SIGN-OFFS

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