Fraser Valley Regional District

CORPORATE REPORT

To: CAO for the Regional and Corporate Services Committee
From: David Urban, Manager of Outdoor Recreation Planning

Date: 2019-09-10
File No: 6140-35-Trails

Subject: Summary of Mountain Biking on Sumas Mountain

INTENT

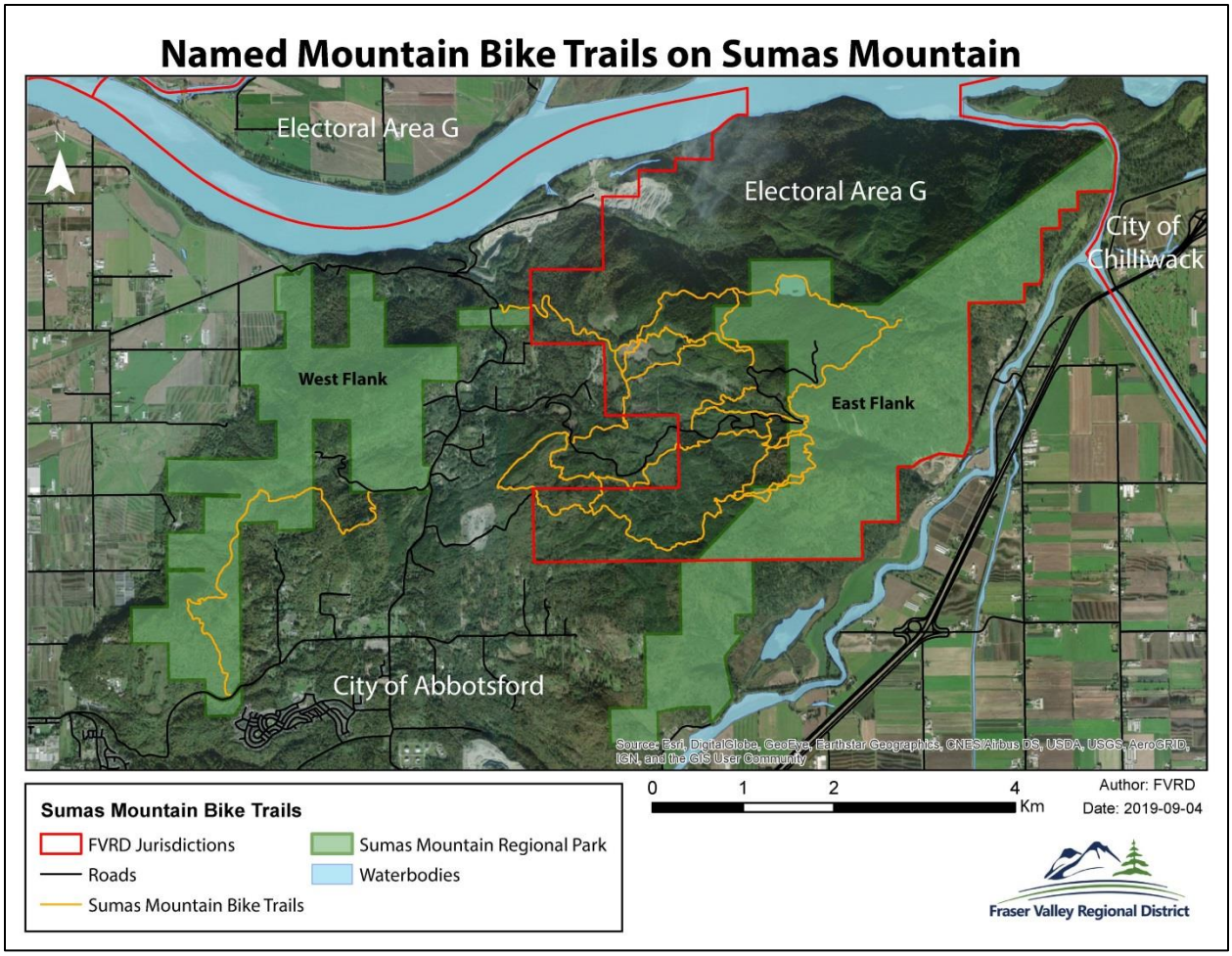
This report is intended to advise the Fraser Valley Regional District Board of information pertaining to mountain biking on Sumas Mountain. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS	PRIORITIES
Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy	Priority #4 Tourism
Support Healthy & Sustainable Community	Priority #5 Outdoor Recreation

BACKGROUND

Earlier this year Director Loewen and staff from both the City of Abbotsford (COA) and the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) met with Chris Friesen, Abbotsford Trail Representative, Fraser Valley Mountain Bike Association (FVMBA) to discuss several topics related to mountain biking on Sumas Mountain. With another mountain bike season coming to an end, the COA has requested that the FVRD provide an update to their Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee about mountain biking on Sumas Mountain.

Sumas Mountain Regional Park is one of several different land tenures on the mountain. Other tenures include City of Abbotsford, First Nations, Crown land, and private land for residential and industrial purposes. The majority of mountain biking trails on Sumas Mountain are on Crown land and only a few are within the regional park, please see Map #1.



Map #1: Mountain Bike Trails on Sumas Mountain

Recreation Sites and Trails BC manages more than 1,350 recreation sites and over 800 trails throughout the province on Crown land. They provide safe and enjoyable public recreation opportunities and in the case of Sumas Mountain are responsible for the majority of the mountain bike trails and associated parking areas. Earlier this year RSTBC were involved in some much needed improvements on the Sumas Mountain forest service road (FSR) and the primary mountain bike parking area. These improvements have been well received by both the biking and trail running communities.

The FVMBA is a registered non-profit, volunteer-run organization whose primary goal is to grow the sport and increase participation through the Fraser Valley. They actively support the development of sanctioned new trails and maintain existing trails to provide a positive experience for a full range of abilities and styles of mountain biking. In addition, they organize group rides, races, and social events geared towards increasing ridership on the trails. On their Board of Directors they have regional directors advancing trails in Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack.

DISCUSSION

Last year the FVRD, the COA and Metro Vancouver (MV) worked collectively to coordinate the transfer of a portion of MV's regional park s to the FVRD as a sub-regional service which included the west flank of Sumas Mountain Inter-Regional Park. Since that time FVRD and COA staff have been working together on a plan forward to advance this park. This summer MV provided the FVRD with their GIS data and this information has now been assimilated into our system. This new information has already been used to confirm the park's boundary. When fully integrated with our data it will highlight any information gaps that are needed before a park management plan is undertaken.

The FVRD Parks department has two counters on Sumas Mountain's main FSR. Based on data collected to date, staff can reasonably estimate the annual usage. For the counter closest to the COA boundary it is anticipated there will be 65,000 users this year and 18,000 users accessing the top of the west flank based on the counter figures near the regional park boundary. With the role RSTBC has on the mountain, it is important to include them in the mountain bike discussion with the City of Abbotsford's Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee.

This year the community directors of the FVMBA began working in both the communities of Agassiz and Hope. To develop existing and new riding areas the FVMBA works with other trail user groups and government organizations. With such a regional approach being taken by this organization, it seems like an appropriate time for the FVRD to collaborate with the FVMBA to better understand and possibly support their aspirations for mountain biking on Sumas Mountain and throughout the region.

COST

The sub-regional parks service area budget covers FVRD staff time.

CONCLUSION

This year's mountain bike season is coming to an end on Sumas Mountain and the City of Abbotsford's Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee has asked for a status update. Since the majority of trails are on Crown land it seems appropriated to have both the FVRD and RSTBC meet with the City's Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee.

Mountain biking is increasing in the region and the Fraser Valley Mountain Bike Association is the leading organization formally developing this sport throughout the region. The FVRD will further collaborate with this organization to better understand their ambitions and see where opportunities exist to support this outdoor recreation activity both on Sumas Mountain and throughout the region.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services: No further financial comments.

Jennifer Kinneman, Acting Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.