

To: CAO for the Electoral Area Services Committee
From: Katelyn Hipwell, Planner II

Date: 2019-11-14
File No: 5400-20-003

Subject: Hemlock Valley Road Upgrades – Request for FVRD Support

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board indicate support for Sasquatch Mountain Resort in their pursuit of additional funding from Provincial and Federal levels of government for necessary paving upgrades to Hemlock Valley Road;

AND FURTHER THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board recognize the importance of Hemlock Valley Road, the only access to the resort community of Hemlock Valley, as vital infrastructure intrinsically tied to the success of the local tourism economy.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy
Support Healthy & Sustainable Community
Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

PRIORITIES

Priority #4 Tourism
Priority #5 Outdoor Recreation

BACKGROUND

The first public access to Hemlock Valley for skiing and winter recreation was introduced in 1969 when Hemlock Valley Recreation (HVR) was established and subsequently a family oriented resort was opened. At the time, access to the resort was by way of a private logging road. In 1973, after the resort established a formal lease area with the provincial government, access from Harrison Mills to the ski resort was further improved by rerouting and upgrading the approximately 20 kilometre logging road, now known as Hemlock Valley Road. The improvements enabled the then Department of Highways (now Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) to gazette the road as a public highway. Since then, MOTI has been responsible for maintaining and improving the road to Hemlock.

Currently, only a portion of Hemlock Valley Road from its starting point at Morris Valley Road (approximately 7 kilometres) is paved; the remaining 14 kilometres of the road is graded gravel.

DISCUSSION

Sasquatch Mountain Resort

Sasquatch Mountain Resort (SMR) received Master Plan approval from the Province in 2016 which resulted in the expansion of the Controlled Recreation Area from 346 hectares to 6,372 hectares and anticipates significant growth and development of the Resort community.

Resultantly, SMR has begun to invest in significant improvements to the existing resort, including the recent expansion of the chairlift capacity and increased parking facilities, with plans for future developments to expand the number and type of tourist accommodations available. As part of this endeavour, SMR is seeking funding from Provincial and Federal levels of government to assist in investments into road upgrades. SMR is proposing to complete the paving of Hemlock Valley Road from where the paved portion of road currently ends to the Resort – a section of road approximately 14 kilometres in length.

Hemlock Valley Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan for Hemlock Valley contains the following policy in support of the proposed upgrades to Hemlock Valley Road:

7.1(C) The Regional Board will encourage and support implementation of any highway improvements projects, including the paving of Hemlock Valley Road.

In addition to consistency with the above noted policy, the proposed paving of Hemlock Valley Road meets the objectives of the following strategic areas of focus and priorities:

1. *Foster a Strong and Diverse Economy*
Improved access to Hemlock Valley will likely have a positive impact on the local tourism economy by improving access to an outdoor recreation asset.
2. *Support a Healthy and Sustainable Community*
Road improvements may help to decrease response times for emergency services to Hemlock Valley.
3. *Provide Responsive and Effective Public Services*
The level of service available to Hemlock Valley residents is limited and often constrained further by poor access. Services such as waste transfer may be improved or expanded with improved access and road conditions.

Regional Growth Strategy

The proposed upgrades to Hemlock Valley Road are not identified as a regionally significant priority in the FVRD's Regional Growth Strategy.

COST

The FVRD does not have any cost recovery mechanism in place for such requests.

CONCLUSION

SMR is pursuing funding opportunities from Provincial and Federal levels of government for necessary upgrades to Hemlock Valley Road in support of their ongoing expansion of the resort.

As a requirement of their submission to the Province (MOTI), SMR must demonstrate support from the local government of jurisdiction as well as from affected First Nations. As such, SMR has requested that the FVRD Board provide confirmation of their support for the Resort's pursuit of additional Provincial and Federal level funding to assist in the paving of the remaining gravel section of Hemlock Valley Road.

COMMENTS BY:

Graham Daneluz, Director of Planning & Development

Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

No further financial comments.

Jennifer Kinneman, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed and supported.