

Staff Report for Decision

DATE OF MEETING JULY 16, 2025

AUTHORED BY CHARLOTTE DAVIS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS

SUBJECT OPTIONS TO EXTEND THE E & N TRAIL SOUTH OF COLUMBIA STREET

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Finance and Audit Committee with options to extend the E & N Trail South of Columbia Street.]

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council add a new project to 2025 for \$148,000 to extend the E&N Trail from Columbia Street to Seventh Street funded by the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.

BACKGROUND

The E & N Trail (the Trail) is an 8 km paved trail that runs parallel to the E & N Railway. The Trail is situated on land owned by the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) and is managed by the City of Nanaimo (the City) as parkland under an agreement between the City and the ICF. The paved trail runs between Holly Avenue in the south and the Metral Drive Complete Street in the north, therefore connecting the downtown to the north end of the City. The Trail through this section is classified as an "Urban Hard Surface Trail" and is paved, unlit and is typically three metres wide. There is also a small 250m completed section between Fitzwilliam Street and Franklyn Street. The completed portions of the Trail are a popular amenity, appealing to the growing population that uses active transportation, as well as people looking for fitness and outdoor recreation opportunities.

On 2014-MAR-20 Nanaimo Council moved to support development of the Trail south from Franklyn Street downtown to Seventh Street by 2019, and directed staff to undertake preliminary design routing work and provide a cost estimate. The results of the study found that it would cost approximately \$10.8M to construct the section in the study area. This high cost was largely due to the number of grade crossing updates that were recommended as part of the report. In particular, the section between Franklyn Street and Hecate Street was considered most difficult and costly due to the number of crossings in that section.

In 2024 City staff and representatives from the ICF and Southern Rail agreed to work together on a soft surface trail connection between Fifth Street (at Princess Street), to Columbia Avenue. This section was chosen as a priority area as many school children were using the active railway as a means to get to school and it was considered a relatively simple section to construct. The work was later expanded to include the section between Hecate Street and Fifth Street as the project was found to be less costly than anticipated once construction had commenced. The work was undertaken by Southern Rail with the support of the ICF and funding was provided by the City.

The total cost of the work was \$40,000 and it was completed in late April 2025, covering a total length of 465m of soft surface trail. This was an unplanned project that was funded by the City's 2025 project contingency budget with the work being undertaken by Southern Rail with support from the ICF. The work did not include any updates to grade crossings and connects users to sidewalks where available. Since completion, the Trail is well used and well received by the community.

DISCUSSION

There is still no trail along the section of E & N Railway between Columbia Avenue and Seventh Street. Staff have worked with Southern Rail and the ICF on the potential to develop this section of trail and have devised some costings for that connection. Staff estimate that the per meter cost of a 3m wide "Urban Soft Surface Trail" along this section of the E & N corridor is \$172 per linear metre, which does not include any updates to grade crossings as there are no grade crossings in this section of rail.. Both Southern Rail and the ICF have indicated that they have the resources and are willing to undertake this work in 2025 with a commitment of funds from the City.

The trail base and infrastructure installed with this project could be overlaid with asphalt in the future if desired.

The estimated projects costs are:

Columbia Avenue to Bing Kee Street - 284 metres - \$53,732.00 (including 10% contingency)

Bing Kee Street to Seventh Street - 450 metres - \$85,140.00 (including 10% contingency)

20 signs - \$3,300.00 (including 10% contingency)

Total = \$147,173.00

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council add a new project to 2025 for \$148,000 to extend the E&N Trail from Columbia Street to Seventh Street funded by the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.
 - The advantages of this option: The Trail will be extended by a total of 734 metres. Achieving a connection between Columbia and Bing Kee Street will complete the connection of soft surface trail between Hecate Street and Seventh Street. This is a section of active rail that is heavily used by pedestrians (including children heading to school) and so represents a significant safety improvement.
 - The disadvantages of this option: This is the costlier option and will utilise more funds from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.
 - Financial Implications: The revised projected 2025 closing balance of the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund is \$3.4 million with a minimum balance requirement of \$351,780. The 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan will be amended at a later date to include the project.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council add a new project to 2025 for \$57,000 to extend the E&N Trail from Columbia Street to Bing Kee Street funded by the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.
 - The advantages of this option: The Trail will be extended by a total of 450 metres. This option is the least costly of the options. This is a section of active rail that is heavily used by pedestrians (including children travelling to school) and so represents a significant safety improvement.
 - The disadvantages of this option: There will be no trail South from Bing Kee Street and so this trail will not reach Seventh Street.
 - Financial Implications: The revised projected 2025 closing balance of the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund is \$3.5 million with a minimum balance requirement of \$351,780. The 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan will be amended at a later date to include the project.
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternate direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The E & N Trail is an approximately 8km long paved trail that runs between Metral Drive in the north and the downtown.
- A new section of the Trail was added in April 2025 running between Hecate Street and Columbia Street. This section of the Trail is 465 metres long and is a soft surface trail.
- The extension of the soft surface trail between Columbia Street and Seventh Street is estimated to cost \$148k and could be completed this year with the allocation of funds from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.
- This extension is supported by both Southern Rail and the ICF.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Map from E & N Trail Study Area from 2015

ATTACHMENT B: Map of E & N Railway and Trail Between Hecate Street and Seventh Street

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