

Corporate Report

NO: R020

COUNCIL DATE: February 7,

2005

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor and Council DATE: February 3,
2005

FROM: General Manager,
Planning and Development FILE: 6140 - 20/M

SUBJECT: Mountain Bike Facilities in Surrey

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report to Dr, Jim Richardson of the Surrey Off Road Cycling Enthusiasts Society.

PURPOSE

City Council received a presentation by Dr, Jim Richardson of the Surrey Off Road Cycling Enthusiasts Society ("SORCE") on Monday, January 17, 2005. This report is in follow-up to that presentation and provides information to Council about what has been done, to date, by the City in regard to providing opportunities for off road cycling and what is planned for the future, related to mountain biking facilities in Surrey parks.

BACKGROUND

Mountain biking has grown as a recreational activity in North America since the early 1980s, with particularly rapid growth noted in the last five years, as general interest in outdoor sports has increased. Significant growth of the sport in the Lower Mainland has occurred at the advanced level.

Mountain biking enthusiasts have put extra pressure on natural areas in Surrey's parks, as they seek out venues to pursue their riding. These pressures can be environmental, where unmanaged recreation uses contribute to degradation of the natural environment. There are also social pressures in relation to the sport where opinions vary within each community and its stakeholders as to the appropriateness of the use, as well as the location and management of the areas where mountain biking is permitted. In Surrey there is unsanctioned mountain bike use at a number of parks, including Invergarry Park, Redwood Park, Latimer Lake Park and Sunnyside Acres

Urban Forest, near the South Surrey Bike Park. At the South Surrey Athletic Park the City, in partnership with SORCE, has developed a mountain biking area and has worked through the above referenced challenges to create a positive destination for mountain bikers.

The South Surrey Bike Park is located in a designated portion of South Surrey Athletic Park, east of Sunnyside Acres Urban Forest. The Bike Park project was initiated through a relationship with the Bike Park Association Society in 1997/98 and had its grand opening in March of 1998. The Association was removed from the project in May of 1998 after conflicts over trail development within the Urban Forest. City staff then took the lead and worked with consultants to further the bike park development. Early in 2000, a Conceptual Master Plan for the Bike Park was prepared in consultation with the Sunnyside Acres Urban Forest Advisory Committee, in response to unsanctioned use of areas outside the Bike Park and demand from users for additional facilities. SORCE, formed in November of that same year, spearheaded by the volunteer efforts of Jim Richardson.

The Conceptual Master Plan is a guideline for phasing of additional construction at the Bike Park and removal of unsanctioned trails. Volunteers, with the assistance of staff of the Urban Forestry Section of the Parks Division, constructed the Bike Park in three phases over the years 2000 to 2004. The Conceptual Master Plan contemplates in the future, the construction of a skills area for the GVRD water reservoir surface located immediately to the east of the existing Bike Park. The Bike Park is approximately six hectares in size, with five kilometres of trails, including obstacles, a dirt jump circuit and technical trials areas. The City has spent approximately \$65,000 over the last four years to partner in trail development and to install a comprehensive trail sign program. Approximately \$20,000 was used directly for the development of the dirt jump area. Today, the facility is unique to Surrey and provides year round enjoyment to recreational off road cyclists of all abilities. Appendix I contains an air photo, site photos and the Conceptual Master Plan for South Surrey Bike Park.

Concurrently, with the development of the Bike Park, the Parks Recreation and Culture Department prepared a document called Guidelines for Bicycle Recreation Facilities, including mountain biking and bicycle trials planning, construction, maintenance and inspection. The document was completed in 2003 and is a resource for City staff involved in bike parks and bike park planning.

Throughout 2003 and 2004, Urban Forestry staff has worked at several other park sites, including Latimer Lake Park and Invergarry Park, on the removal of unsanctioned trails and the installation of accepted mountain bike trails. A relationship with users has been developed at Latimer Lake Park where installation of signs and trail improvements are nearly complete. Users at Invergarry Park, however, have been acting independently.

DISCUSSION

SORCE is an insured Cycling BC Club, affiliated with the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), with more than 300 volunteer members. Its Sprockids Youth Programs are a focus for interested families and youth in the area. SORCE programs run in cooperation with the City's Community and Leisure Services programs and participation in the June Bikefest event sponsored by SORCE has grown annually.

City staff continues to work closely with this volunteer group to improve and enhance the South Surrey Bike Park facility, with input from the Sunnyside Acres Urban Forest Advisory Committee. Yearly activities include provision of design for modifications to the park, placement of signs, leadership at volunteer trail maintenance days and regular safety inspections.

The relationship with SORCE has proven to be successful. In recent years, a decline in negative activities related

to mountain biking in the South Surrey Athletic Park and reduced vandalism in this portion of the park is notable. Negative impacts on the urban forest have been greatly reduced. The relationship between SORCE and the Sunnyside Acres Urban Forest Advisory Committee is positive and respectful, where it was once more adversarial. SORCE acts as an advocate on site for sustainable and respectful bike practices in the Urban Forest setting.

Based on the successful model and relationships at South Surrey Bike Park, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department has plans to further the bike park program in the City in 2005. In this year's Park Capital Budget program, \$50,000 is allocated for bike park planning and development. These funds will be utilized in four ways:

1. To continue the partnership with SORCE at the South Surrey Athletic Park. Early in 2005, the Department will work with SORCE to prepare a phased enhancement plan for the entry and staging area for the existing Bike Park. A portion of the funds will be used to construct a part of the enhancements to the Bike Park. City staff will also help SORCE coordinate with the GVRD the plan for the completion of a technical skills circuit on the top of the water reservoir;
2. To complete the trail design at Latimer Lake in Campbell Heights, as part of the Master Plan for the Latimer Lake Park that will also be prepared this year;
3. To continue efforts to contact users and to work toward formalizing acceptable mountain biking areas and practices at Invergarry Park; and
4. To commence a master planning process to develop a strategy for bike park locations and designs across the City to meet the demand from local cyclists, while protecting natural areas.

It is important that City staff continue to work with bike park users to foster relationships and respect for protected areas.

CONCLUSION

The South Surrey Bike Park is nearly complete and is becoming a premier cycling destination. The City will continue to work in partnership with mountain bike users and SORCE to maintain and enhance the facility. The City will continue to work toward planning, partnering, constructing, managing and maintaining a system of mountain bike facilities throughout the City, as resources permit such work to be completed.

It is recommended that Council authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report to Dr, Jim Richardson of SOURCE.

Murray Dinwoodie,
General Manager
Planning and Development

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Attachments:

Appendix I Air photo, site photos and the Conceptual Master Plan for South Surrey Bike Park

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Appendix I







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