



Corporate Report

NO: C017

COUNCIL DATE: July 23, 2007

COUNCIL-IN-COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: July 12, 2007
FROM: General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture FILE: 6140-20/B
SUBJECT: Draft Bicycle Recreation Facilities Strategy

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Endorse in principle the Draft *Bicycle Recreation Facilities Strategy* as presented in the attachment to this report and direct staff to incorporate the findings of this Strategy within the Parks, Recreation and Culture Ten-Year Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND

The City of Surrey's Parks Recreation and Culture Department is experiencing growing demands for non-traditional bicycle recreation, including off-road mountain biking (cross-country, free-riding¹, skills², dirt jumping³, pump track riding⁴, etc.) and BMX riding (urban riding, dirt jumping and racing). With the exception of South Surrey Bike Park, Latimer Lake Park, and two small dirt jump areas at the Cloverdale Athletic Park and Port Kells Park, there are few formal facilities in Surrey. The cycling community has developed numerous informal facilities throughout Surrey's parks and, in some cases, on private land. To help better manage this growing sport, to promote youth recreation and

¹ **Free-riding** consists of descending often steep trails and variable terrain on trails that include a variety of obstacles such as teeter-totters, drop offs, jumps and ladder bridges.

² **Skills areas** provide a series of obstacles and features like teeter totters, boxes, drop-offs and ladders bridges that bikers ride onto, along and over. Skills areas are becoming popular, are easy to develop in small spaces, and accommodate a variety of skill levels and bike types.

³ **Dirt jumping** consists of a riders going over a variety of relatively steep and often high dirt jumps. Jumps are usually placed in a line with some paired together. More advanced jumps often have an open gap between them. Riders will go over the jumps and do any number of tricks while in mid-air.

⁴ **Pump tracks** are small, dirt tracks designed with tight corners, banked corners and small bumps. The goal is to go around the track without pedalling. Riders 'push' their bikes into and around the corners and bumps to build up momentum and speed.

active living, and to reduce the number of informal facilities in Surrey, the Department prepared a *Bicycle Recreation Facilities Strategy* (the Strategy) through a year long community consultation process in 2006. The Strategy provides guidelines for the provision of new facilities, the upgrading of existing non-traditional facilities, and the maintenance and operating requirements of these facilities over the short-, medium- and long-terms.

DISCUSSION

The City retained the services of the Verdant Group, consulting planners and landscape architects, through a competitive Request for Proposals Process in May of 2006 to assist with the project.

Development of the Strategy included three key components: a comprehensive survey of non-traditional biking trends and issues in Surrey and beyond; an assessment of candidate park sites and development of bicycle facility proposals; and a diverse public consultation program. The public consultation process and resulting proposed projects are described below:

Public Consultation

A review of the trends in the sport, and throughout the lower mainland in particular assisted in establishing an understanding of the current needs in Surrey.

The public consultation phase was launched at the 5th Annual Surrey Bike Fest at South Surrey Bike Park on June 24, 2006, with displays and information about the process, a broad public survey and a project website www.surreybikepark.ca, The Surrey Bike Fest is an annual event sponsored by SORCE, (Surrey Off Road Cycling Enthusiasts Society). SORCE is a partner with the City in the planning and operations of the South Surrey Bike Park and Latimer Lake Bike Parks, and the project team liaised with SORCE throughout the project. More than 400 people were in attendance at the event and approximately 300 residents responded to the survey. Survey participants ranged from 8 to 89 years of age.

Through the summer of 2006 the staff team worked to draft the strategy, including short, medium and long term improvements, and geared up for a second bike park event called the Surrey Bike Parks Review and for an open house to solicit public comment on the draft strategy. This phase included a second web-based survey.

The Surrey Bike Park Review, held at the South Surrey Bike Park on September 30, 2006, included dirt jump demonstrations, displays about the project, booths sponsored by local bike clubs and retailers, a clay modelling booth, and music, food and prizes donated by retailers. Nearly 250 residents attended the event. A traditional open house that followed City-standard processes for mail out and advertisement was also held at the Guildford Recreation Centre on October 4, 2006. Over 3000 residents were invited by direct mail to the events, and 200 completed survey forms were collected in this phase.

Following these events, a preferred Strategy was finalized. On December 5, 2006 an open house was held at City Hall. Surveys were mailed to all 3000 households that had been sent the invitations to the first Open House, along with invitations to the December

5th Open House. In addition, advertisements were placed in the local newspapers informing residents of the Open House. Eighteen people attended the meeting.

In January and February of 2007, information panels were displayed at Surrey's Community Centres and survey forms provided to individuals who wished to submit comments. In this final round of consultation 89 surveys were received.

The research, surveys and public involvement indicate that the City of Surrey can expect continued demand for non-traditional bicycle facilities. The growth of these healthy and youth-positive recreational activities should be supported and encouraged, particularly given the minimal costs of developing and maintaining non-traditional bicycle recreation facilities in comparison to other, more traditional recreational facilities. The uniformly strong and diverse public support (i.e., all age groups [from 6 to 89], riders and non-riders, and all Surrey neighbourhoods) received throughout the planning process underscores both the demand and need for such facilities. **Overall, 90% of the survey respondents were supportive of the strategy.**

Relationship to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Ten-Year Strategic Plan

As noted earlier in this report, numerous informal, unauthorized off-road bike trails have been developed in local parks and greenbelts over the last five years, causing damage to parks and increasing risk to the City from poorly planned and manufactured infrastructure. Based on this, and based also on expressed need for these facilities from organized cyclists, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department moved ahead with this strategy well in advance of undertaking the Ten-Year Strategic Plan.

The information from the Bicycle Recreation Facilities Strategy has been provided to the consultants who are leading the Parks, Recreation and Culture Ten-Year Strategic Plan process. The consultants in turn have provided staff with early results from the extensive survey undertaken across the city with regards to preference for types of new outdoor recreation facilities. This survey shows that cycling trails are tied with walking trails as the most desired facilities in city parks, and that separately, bike parks are rated as higher than sport fields in terms of demand for new or improved facilities. Should Council endorse in principle the Bicycle Recreation Facilities Strategy, staff will ensure that the findings of the Strategy are provided to the consultants to incorporate into the new Parks, Recreation and Culture Ten-Year Strategic Plan.

Recommended Projects

The Strategy's recommended upgrades to current facilities, and the proposed development of new bicycle facilities, will occur over the short- (2007 to 2009), medium- (2010 to 2012) and long-terms (2013 and beyond).

The Strategy's short-term improvements are briefly outlined in the bulleted points below. They are prioritized based on community service area need, Surrey Parks staff input and guidance, and a public ranking of new facility development phasing that was carried out through the project's public involvement process. The estimated total capital cost of the short-term improvements and upgrades (with most to be supported through the annual

Park Development Capital Program) is \$420,000, with this total being less than the cost of a sand-based grass sports field.

- **Fleetwood Athletic Park (Fleetwood):** Four lines of dirt jumps will be developed west of the Surrey Sports and Leisure Complex at the Fraser Highway and complement the existing youth park at this location.
- **Bear Creek Youth Park (Fleetwood/Newton):** The existing skate/bike park will be improved with addition of concrete spine and three rail rides designed for urban BMX riders. Two rows of dirt jumps are to be developed next to the Skate/bike Park. A single, family-oriented cross country loop will be developed to the immediate east, below the power lines.
- **Cloverdale Athletic Park (Cloverdale):** The existing BMX practice track will be upgraded and revitalized. The underutilized tot lot playground to the west of the BMX track will be converted to a Skills Park/Urban BMX area when the playground is removed and/or relocated.
- **Unwin Park (Newton):** Four lines of dirt jumps, a small skills area and a pump track will be developed in the south-west corner of the park.
- **Port Kells Park (Cloverdale):** The existing dirt jumps will be upgraded and improved.
- **Invergarry Park (Whalley):** Multiple facilities will be developed in a previously disturbed area (a former construction waste dump) to the east of Bonnacord Creek and ravine, including a free-ride area in a natural bowl area, a small skills park and four rows of dirt jumps.
- **Fraser Heights Park (Guildford):** Four rows of dirt jumps and a pump track will be developed in south end of park.
- **Hillcrest Park (Cloverdale):** Three rows of dirt jumps will be developed near the existing playground, (subject to further public consultation).

Over the medium-term (2010 to 2012), the Strategy proposes developing a unique greenway bike network for cross-country riders called the Green Line. The facility will be developed on existing and planned greenways and bikeways that would connect many of the bike facilities recommended in this strategy. The Green Line, a single-track trail network/loop, would be a one-of-kind facility in the Lower Mainland, stretching almost 70-kilometres around Surrey.

Over the long-term (2013 and beyond), the Strategy proposes that facilities at Joe Brown Park and Port Mann Park be developed. Despite the long-term development time lines for these parks, the City of Surrey has identified both as potential sites for non-traditional bicycle facilities through independent and park master planning processes. Over the long-term, facilities may also be considered in the Douglas, Grandview and South Westminster neighbourhoods, as community planning processes unfold for those areas.

Currently, support and resources for the maintenance and operations of bicycle facilities in Surrey falls under the care of City of Surrey Parks Division staff in the each of the Division's operations areas. Structural Maintenance staff will ensure that new bicycle parks and bicycle park features are maintained at appropriate levels. Additional support will be provided through the City of Surrey's successful *Partners-in-Parks Program* where Park Partnership staff resources will work with local Park Stewards to involve

bicycle park users in the ongoing maintenance and operations of facilities. The need for additional staff will be reviewed annually through the Parks Department's operating budget. The potential of hiring a bicycle facilities maintenance contractor will be explored if facility use warrants it.

As stated earlier, it is expected that many of the short-term improvements can be completed within the Annual Park Development Capital Program. Major improvements such as Invergarry Bike Park will require additional funding, and these will be brought forward for Council's consideration as part of the Five-Year Financial Plan. The Green Line will be built partially in part with the City Greenways program, a partnership with the Engineering Department.

CONCLUSION

The City is experiencing growing demands for non-traditional bicycle recreation opportunities. Based on this, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department prepared a *Bicycle Recreation Facilities Strategy* through a yearlong community consultation process in 2006. The Strategy provides guidelines for the provision of new facilities, the upgrading of existing non-traditional facilities, and the maintenance and operating requirements of these facilities over the short, medium and long-terms.

As the findings of the Bicycle Recreation Facilities Strategy are consistent with early survey results from the Parks, Recreation and Culture Ten-Year Strategic Plan, the consultants for the Ten-Year Strategic Plan will be asked to incorporate the key findings of the Bike Strategy within the larger departmental document for Council's further consideration.

Laurie Cavan
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Attachment – Copy of Draft Bicycle Recreation Strategy

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