

# Council Member Motion

Notice given on: Tuesday, February 21, 2023

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Meeting Date	Wednesday, March 1, 2023
From	Councillor Istace
Subject	Review Sanctioning of Cycling on Mt Richards and Related Economic Opportunity

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## Background

North Cowichan will be looking to sanction and develop the Mt. Richards trail network starting in 2024 based on the 2017 Parks & Trails Master Plan (PMTP). I am looking for councils support to further explore the position paper from the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society (CTSS) delegation advocating to amend the plan to include cross country cycling which was excluded from the final draft of the adopted plan.

This position comes from a social, ecological and economic perspective based on Stantec Consulting's 2016 reports to the Parks & Trails Committee and Forest Advisory Committee. This is also based on the past 5 years working partnership with CTSS and MNC implementing the PTMP and learned experiences on how multi-use trail systems can be successfully managed. Additionally, Mt Richards trail network has the closest accessibility to residences, schools, commercial properties & community amenities that no other of the six mountains offer.

With the economic uncertainty of Paper Excellence as a prime employer to the town, exploring new economic development opportunities would be a task well suited for North Cowichan's new Economic Development committee. This work also aligns with North Cowichan Council's 2022 strategic priorities with regards to supporting local organizations as well as promoting sport tourism as an economic driver.

In the Cowichan Valley, we are now starting to see the economic spinoffs in business and tourism from the execution of North Cowichan's Parks and Trails master plan as well the local Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Cowichan supporting the trails networks and pursuing marketing campaigns. local bike shops expanding, several new cycle coaching businesses opening as well as a handful of World Elite Cycling Athletes (as well as Cycling Canada National team members training here) moving to the municipality thanks to the benefits of having a well-managed premier park & trail system.

Additionally, the partnership of the Municipality of North Cowichan with the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society (CTSS) has set the community partnership development bar high with other Vancouver Island communities now emulating the success of this working relationship. The CRD (Sooke) and RDN (Nanaimo) recently have formalized agreements with their respective trail associations.

Once at the Economic Development committee, staff can work with committee members to bring together the vast experience of North Cowichan organizations, businesses and residents involved in tourism, cycling and economic development to further explore the CTSS position paper. Outside independent experts can be retained to help the committee and staff hear from North Cowichan residents as well as Mt Richards user groups through public engagement. Research can be undertaken on the economic potential of cycling to the community of Crofton.

To summarize I share all of this to highlight the potential to change at how we look at the sanctioned use of Mt Richards with regards to the economic benefit to Crofton and North Cowichan as a whole. Crofton can be seen as North Cowichan's remarkable outdoor getaway from cycling and hiking, to kayaking and equestrian plus so much more. Together we can achieve a bigger picture on future uses of the mountain trail network in a holistic and inclusive forward looking way where everyone feels heard and a positive outcome is achieved.

### **Recommendation**

THAT Council refer the matter of sport tourism to the Economic Development Committee and ask that they further investigate the proposal submitted by the Cowichan Trails Stewardship Society to develop Mount Richards for mixed-use outdoor recreation that encompasses cycling, and that the Committee make a recommendation to Council that considers the economic, social, and environmental impacts that cycling may pose to Mount Richards and other user groups.

Attachment: (1) Economic Development Benefits