



News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 27, 2018

Okanagan Rail Trail officially opens

Future generations will enjoy the connections forged by the partner jurisdictions of the Okanagan Rail Trail. Today, September 27, the District of Lake Country, City of Kelowna, Okanagan Indian Band and Regional District of the North Okanagan cut the ribbon to officially open the trail.

“The trail will provide an alternative multimodal transportation system, improving the livability of our communities and supporting a healthy, active lifestyle,” said Mayor Baker, District of Lake Country. “We are grateful for the various contributions that allowed us to take advantage of this unparalleled opportunity to create a legacy for our communities.”

The nearly 50 km multimodal recreational trail spans from Coldstream to Kelowna. Residents in the communities will be connected by an attractive, accessible and safe, walking and cycling trail that allows them to include exercise into their daily routines and enjoy opportunities to explore nature and learn about the heritage of the area.

“Today we were able to celebrate the collaborative effort of municipal partners and community partners coming together to bring this trail to fruition,” said Mayor Basran, City of Kelowna. “We would also like to thank our funding agencies - the provincial and federal governments as well as the residents for helping to create something of great value for all of our communities. Investment in active transportation is so valuable to our continued community growth and quality of life for all residents.”

The completion of the trail development is attributed to the community-based fundraising campaign by the Okanagan Rail Trail Initiative (ORTI). The ORTI supported the work required to design and build a continuous basic trail from the Coldstream to Kelowna by raising \$7.8 million from 5,089 generous donors – including the Government of Canada and Government of British Columbia.

“The completion of Phase 1 of the Okanagan Rail Trail marks a significant milestone in a project with dedicated partners and a passionate community”, said Bob Fleming, Board Chair, Regional District of North Okanagan. “The trail is a unique amenity that drives connections between communities and it will definitely be cherished for generations.”

The Government of Canada provided nearly \$1.4 million through the New Building Canada Fund, and \$471,500 from the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program. Trail development also received nearly \$1.3 million from Government of British Columbia through BikeBC and the BC Rural Dividend Fund.

“The Okanagan Rail Trail is a perfect example of what can be accomplished when we work together,” said the Honorable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and Minister responsible for Western Economic Diversification Canada. “We’re not just building a

recreational trail – we’re investing in stronger, better connected communities that improve the quality of life for Canadians.”

“The rugged beauty of the Okanagan Valley is one of our best assets and supports a diverse range of recreational interests,” said Stephen Fuhr, Member of Parliament for Kelowna–Lake Country, on behalf of the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities. “The Government of Canada is proud to be working with our partners to invest in infrastructure that improves people’s quality of life at the local level while building a stronger Canada on the whole.”

“B.C. is a leader in North America when it comes to cycling infrastructure, and the Okanagan Rail Trail is an example of how these projects can bring communities together,” said Claire Trevena, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. “Building a culture of cycling encourages healthy living and reduces emissions, and we’re proud that we could contribute with BikeBC funding that helped to make this trail a reality.”

“We’re pleased to provide \$500,000 to support the development and construction of the Okanagan Rail Trail,” said Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “This project is a great example of partners and all levels of government pulling together to create jobs, promote recreational and cultural activities, and contribute to local economies.”

“The Okanagan Rail Trail offers opportunities for all who use it to learn about the Syilx (Okanagan) people, our territory and part of the rich history of the Okanagan Valley,” said Chief Louis, Okanagan Indian Band.

While the majority of the trail is open, the access between the Kelowna International Airport and Duck Lake is not open for public use. These lands are being reviewed by senior government through the federal reserve process and Agricultural Land Commission. It’s asked that trail users respect this closure.

For more information, visit okanaganrailtrail.ca.

- 30 -

Opening celebration

The opening celebration took place at 11 a.m. at the Oyama Boat Launch, Wood Lake in Lake Country. It was attended by more than 350 people – including municipal partners, community partners, funding agencies and residents.

The event included a ribbon cutting ceremony before attendees were invited to take an inaugural walk or cycle down the trail to Woodsdale Road (approximately 6.5 km).

Photo attached

Okanagan Rail Trail – Allowed Uses

- **Active transportation:** Non-motorized modes of transportation including walking, cycling, roller blading, skateboards, push scooters and other human-powered devices.
- **Mobility assistance devices:** Mobility assistance devices including motorized wheelchairs and electric scooters.
- **Electric bicycles:** Electricity powered electronic bicycles or motor-assisted cycles, in accordance with the BC Motor Assisted Cycle Regulation, are allowed. If your bicycle has a gas engine attached it is not allowed.
- **Dogs:** Dogs are welcome on-leash along the trail. Owners are reminded to pick-up after their dog.

Background

Local governments and the Province of B.C. invested \$22 million in the purchase of the discontinued CN rail corridor running from Coldstream to Kelowna. In doing so they made a long-term commitment to securing the rail corridor as a multi-modal regional transportation corridor, including use of the corridor as a recreational trail.

Purchase of the discontinued rail line was finalized on June 1, 2015 by the City of Kelowna, the District of Lake Country, the Regional District of North Okanagan and the Province of B.C.

The Okanagan Rail Trail Initiative, a community-based fundraising campaign, helped to raise the nearly \$8 million that was required to design and build the continuous basic trail from Coldstream to Kelowna. The work of the community-based fundraising campaign was completed with help of all levels of government plus nearly 5,000 individual donors and businesses.

For more information

Andrew Gibbs, Senior Project Manager, City of Kelowna
250-469-8863

Matt Vader, Manager Strategic and Support Services, District of Lake Country
250-766-5650 (ext.221) or mvader@lakecountry.bc.ca

Victor Rumbolt, Executive Director, Okanagan Indian Band
250-542-4328 (ext.221) or ed@okanagan.org

Ashley Gregerson, Communications Officer, Regional District of North Okanagan
ashley.gregerson@rdno.ca or 250-550-3707