

DATE: October 1, 2019**FILE:** 6120-01**TO:** Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer***R. Dyson*****RE: Lazo Road Active Transportation Planning****Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to present information and to seek direction from the Board regarding the multi-jurisdictional Lazo Road pathway project.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT a planning process be undertaken to identify the best route options for an active transportation pathway from the intersection of Butcher Road and Lazo Road to the community of Point Holmes with a multijurisdictional approach between the Town of Comox, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Comox Valley Regional District once the Town of Comox has identified a new Parks Superintendent.

Executive Summary

Staff at the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) have been engaged with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and the Town of Comox to explore the construction of a multijurisdictional separated path along or adjacent to Lazo Road.

- The original scope of the project was to create a separated or protected pathway within or adjacent to the Lazo Road dedication between Guthrie Road and the Point Holmes community.
- This project was meant to be constructed in conjunction with a Ministry of Transportation culvert replacement/amphibian crossing project within the Lazo Marsh. These culverts have since been replaced in advance of road widening scheduled for 2020.
- Future staff retirements and the departure of the CAO at the Town of Comox have stalled the delivery of the project.
- A delegation presented to EASC at its September meeting regarding safety concerns along Lazo Road between Butchers Road and Gage Road. This could affect the scope of the original pathway project.

Prepared by:

M. Harrison

Mark Harrison
Manager of Parks

Concurrence:

D. DeMarzo

Doug DeMarzo
General Manager of
Community Services

Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure	✓
Town of Comox	✓
K'ómoks First Nation	✓
Co-Management Committee for the Lazo Marsh-North East Comox Conservation Area	✓

Background/Current Situation

In late 2018, MOTI began planning for the replacement of collapsed road culverts within the Lazo Road dedication at the Lazo Marsh. Part of the capital works plan was also to add additional culverts to support amphibian crossing under Lazo Road. This site has been a place of high mortality for amphibians and an amphibian crossing in this location has been long supported by the Co-Management Committee for the Lazo Marsh-North East Comox Conservation Area.

In a letter of support for the amphibian crossing project dated December 13, 2019 (see Appendix A), the CVRD also expressed to MOTI an interest in partnership opportunities in regards to the construction of a safer active transportation route between Guthrie Road and the Point Holmes community. To achieve project synergies, this active transportation project was planned to be constructed in conjunction with the scheduled MOTI culvert replacement project. The construction of a safer active transportation route would require collaborative efforts between the CVRD, MOTI and the Town of Comox.

After initial high level meetings, the Town of Comox agreed to lead the active transportation project. The proposed Lazo Road separated pathway would include approximately 800 metres within the regional district's boundary (including approximately 200 metres over the Lazo Marsh) and approximately 700 metres within the Town of Comox's boundary. The pathway would be located within or adjacent to Lazo Road dedication.

Since MOTI would be replacing two failing culverts, early discussions revolved around the potential for MOTI to expand the road shoulders to accommodate protected active transportation lanes over the Lazo Marsh. However, later discussions with MOTI indicated that extra road widening could only accommodate the extra paving required to expand the vehicular travel lane and standard paved shoulder. In August of 2019, MOTI began the culvert replacement project in advance of road widening which is to occur in 2020. At this stage, MOTI is not sure what width of shoulder will be available for active transportation use outside the vehicle travel lane, however, space for a separated or protected path through the Lazo Marsh section of road will likely not be possible. Therefore, the CVRD will now need to consider the construction of an elevated boardwalk through this 200 metre section of road if pathway separation is desired.

Recently a delegation to the September Electoral Areas Services Committee (EASC) also presented safety challenges along Lazo Road between Butcher Road and Gage Road. By expanding the scope of the Lazo Road pathway project to include this area some planning for safe active transportation routes will need to be completed to help identify solutions to some of the concerns raised by residents. Other concerns the group identified such as travel lane width and speeding remain the sole jurisdiction of the province.

Recent discussions with staff at the Town of Comox indicate that upcoming retirements will impact the delivery of the Lazo Road active transportation project. Retirements include the Town of Comox's Park Superintendent who was the project lead. This, coupled with the departure of the Town's Chief Administrative Officer, have led to the project being stalled.

Policy Analysis

The CVRD Transportation Road Network Plan (2014) provides a framework for the region's long-term active transportation network. Within this plan, a bikeway (designed to accommodate cyclists with a bike lane, wide shoulder or shared vehicle lane) has been identified along Lazo Road.

Goal 3 of the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan (2011) identifies linking communities with greenways.

Options

The following options are available for the Board's consideration:

1. Direct staff to postpone the Lazo Road pathway project until a new Parks Superintendent is in place at the Town of Comox.
2. Direct staff to continue to unilaterally explore the Lazo Road pathway options within CVRD boundaries including an elevated boardwalk over the Lazo Marsh.
3. Direct staff to abandon the Lazo Road pathway project at this time.

Staff recommend option 1 at this time.

Financial Factors

With the MOTI culvert replacement project over Lazo Marsh partially completed and no apparent room within the road cross-section to add a separated or protected pathway to this section of road, the CVRD may wish to explore elevated boardwalks over the Lazo Marsh. Preliminary estimates for a 200 metre elevated boardwalk over the marsh is approximately \$60,000 or \$300/metre.

Costs to construct a 3 metre wide separated asphalt trail is approximately \$400/metre. With 600 metres of trail outside the marsh area, a separated asphalt trail between Guthrie Road and Wallace Road would cost approximately \$240,000 to construct. Some of this alignment has the potential to be constructed along Old Lazo Road which could decrease project costs.

Costs to construct a pathway between Butcher Road and Guthrie Road are unknown at this time since type and location of infrastructure have not been identified. This route is approximately 1300 metres in length.

Area B has committed \$100,000 in community works funds for 2019 to help contribute to design costs with the remainder being used for initial construction.

Legal Factors

Not relevant.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

Work on this pathway project meets the following objectives of the Regional Growth Strategy:

- Objective 4-B: improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to increase the use of active transportation options.
- Objective 4-C: Develop and maintain an inter-regional transportation system that efficiently and safely facilitates the movement of people and goods.
- Objective 7-A: Increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists in the Comox Valley.
- Objective 8-B: Reduce GHG emissions created by the on-road transportation sector.

Intergovernmental Factors

Implementation of the Lazo Road pathway will involve continued collaborative efforts with the following agencies:

- MOTI. Pathway construction within the boundaries of the CVRD will require the approval of MOTI who manage the road network with the regional district;
- Town of Comox. To connect the Point Holmes community part of the pathway will need to be constructed within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Town of Comox.
- Co-Management Committee for the Lazo Marsh-North East Comox Conservation Area.

Interdepartmental Involvement

Implementation of the Lazo Road pathway will involve continued support from corporate services, financial services and GIS services.

Citizen/Public Relations

At the September, 2019 EASC a delegation presented concerns related to pedestrian safety along Lazo Road between Butchers Road and Gage Road.

Connecting the Point Holmes community to the Town of Comox would help address ongoing safety concerns from pedestrians and cyclists that travel this route.

Attachments: Appendix A – “Letter of Support for Lazo Amphibian Crossing”

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File: 6130-08- Lazo Marsh NE Woods

December 13, 2018

Sent email only: Alycia.Traas@gov.bc.ca

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
550 Comox Road
Courtenay, BC
V9N 3P6

Attention: Alycia Traas

Re: Letter of Support for Lazo Road Amphibian Crossing

As an active member of the Co-Management Committee for the Lazo Marsh-North East Comox Conservation Area the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) understands the critical importance of addressing the need for an amphibian crossing under Lazo Road.

It was upon receipt of the report Amphibian Road Surveys and Mitigation Assessments at Three Sites on Vancouver Island by E. Wind Consulting dated December 7, 2011, that the CVRD and other members of the co-management committee became aware the high level of mortality occurring on Lazo Road. Surveys found the crossing survival rate is less than 5 per cent and that red listed species are amongst those being killed. The CVRD is gravely concerned about this high mortality rate occurring within a provincially designated wildlife management area and supports plans for amphibian crossings under Lazo Road.

The CVRD also feels the corridor could benefit from safer pedestrian routes connecting Guthrie Road to Point Holmes. As such we are interested in partnering with the Town of Comox and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to create a safer active transportation corridor.

We are happy to assist where we can to get the amphibian crossings constructed as soon as possible and enhance the active transportation corridor and would appreciate if you would keep us advised of progress on this project.

Sincerely,

T. Ian Smith

T. Ian Smith, MCE
General Manager of Community Services

cc: Doug DeMarzo, Manager of Parks, CVRD
Mike Pearson, MOTI