

**DATE:** May 4, 2020

**FILE:** 6120-01

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Electoral Areas Services Committee

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

*R. Dyson*

**RE: Lazo Road Active Transportation Planning Process**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the planning process for the Lazo Road pathway project.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT staff be directed to suspend planning work on the Lazo Road pathway project until 2021.

**Executive Summary**

Planning for the Lazo Road pathway project between the Point Holmes community and Butchers Road had been postponed in anticipation of the Town of Comox hiring a new parks superintendent who would lead the joint planning process.

- Although the Town has filled the parks superintendent position, they have suspended project work until 2021 because of COVID-19.
- The Friends of Comox-Lazo Forest Reserve Society have requested that the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) continue to unilaterally deliver the project within CVRD boundaries.
- Staff are recommending that the CVRD postpone project delivery until 2021 in alignment with the Town of Comox to keep the multijurisdictional approach for this project intact and to reduce overall project costs.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

*M. Harrison*

*D. DeMarzo*

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Mark Harrison  
Manager of Parks

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Doug DeMarzo  
General Manager of Community Services

**Government Partners and 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	✓
Friends of Comox-Lazo Forest Reserve Society	✓

### Background/Current Situation

Discussions surrounding the construction of a safer active transportation (AT) route along Lazo Road began in 2018 after the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) indicated they were planning to replace collapsed culverts within the provincial road dedication at the Lazo Marsh. Local governments and community partners felt that project synergies were possible if efforts were made to coordinate the construction of a safer AT route and amphibian crossings along with the ministry road culvert replacement work.

In August of 2019 the failing road culverts were replaced and the additional amphibian culverts were constructed under the road surface in anticipation of 1.1 kilometres of road paving on Lazo Road between Guthrie Road and Simba Road. This road paving project began in April of 2020 and is expected to be finished in mid-May of 2020. This road paving project will include road shoulder buildup and 1.5 m of paved shoulder outside of the paved vehicle travel lanes. It may also include a small volume of invasive plant removal adjacent to the road prism within the Lazo Marsh.

Installation of amphibian fencing is currently being planned by MOTI which would direct amphibians into the culverts. This work is tentatively planned for the fall of 2020. Indications from Sean Wong, Senior Biologist at MOTI, is that there could be possible trail design synergies through the Lazo Marsh area with the planned amphibian fencing as there is room for additional earthworks within the road dedication for additional widening. This somewhat contradicts previous information from MOTI that suggested widening was only possible to accommodate the extra road paving. Further design work would need to be done to determine how much extra widening is available and whether or not this would accommodate a separated or protected pathway.

Retirements at the Town of Comox and the departure of the Towns Chief Administrative Officer led to the AT portion of the coordinated project being stalled.

At the October 29, 2019 CVRD Board meeting the following resolution was brought forth:

“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.”

In January of 2020 the Town of Comox hired a new parks superintendent, Andrew Burger, to replace outgoing parks superintendent Al Fraser. Soon after, staff at the CVRD reached out to Andrew Burger to discuss the Lazo Road pathway project in an effort to jumpstart the process anew. This was followed up with a meeting between MOTI and the Town of Comox on March 11, 2020 where preliminary discussions occurred around project scope, anticipated project challenges and anticipated project delivery.

At the March meeting it was agreed that the Town of Comox would continue to lead the project delivery with support from the CVRD. The Town committed to working towards drafting an Request for Proposals (RFP) for design services with the plan to award this work in 2020 in anticipation of pathway construction in 2021. The RFP was to separate out the scope of work into distinct zones so the two local governments would each have a clear idea of design requirements, specific technical details and costing within their respective jurisdictions.

The complete Lazo Road pathway project is projected to span 2.9 km from the Sand Pines Road in the Point Holmes community to Butchers Road and includes segments within the Town of Comox and segments within the CVRD. Approximately 1.3 kilometres of the proposed pathway lies within

the regional CVRD. The table below provides a breakdown of trail distances within each jurisdiction.

**Table 1 – Projected trail distances within each jurisdiction**

Jurisdiction	Segment 1 Sand Pines Road to Guthrie Road	Segment 2 Guthrie Road to Butchers Road	Total
Town of Comox	600m	950m	1550m
CVRD	950m (includes 150m over marsh)	400m	1350m
Total (approximate)	1550m	1350m	2900m

Following the declaration of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the BC declaration of a state of emergency and consequent re-organization of business priorities at all levels of government in mid to late March, the Town of Comox gave notice on April 17, 2020 that monetary funds for the Lazo project would be postponed until 2021.

### 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 consideration:

1. Direct staff to postpone the delivery of the Lazo Road pathway project until 2021 in alignment with the Town of Comox.
2. Direct staff to postpone the delivery of the Lazo Road pathway project until 2021 except for the portion of the trail over the Lazo Marsh to see if design and build synergies exist with the MOTI amphibian fencing project.
3. Direct staff to continue unilaterally with the Lazo Road pathway project within CVRD boundaries only.
4. Direct staff to abandon the Lazo Road pathway project.

Staff are recommending option 1 at this time. There are inherent project synergies and cost savings when working in partnership with the Town on Comox.

### Financial Factors

Cost savings are possible when coordinating design and construction efforts with the Town of Comox and MOTI. The Town of Comox has suspended project work in 2020 which would mean additional project costs and resources for the CVRD if it was decided to continue with the project on its own.

Cost savings could be possible over the Lazo Marsh if pathway efforts were coordinated with the MOTI amphibian fencing project. This effort, however, would require increased staff resources at a time when resources are stretched. Detailed conceptual design for the Lazo Marsh section of trail, which could involve boardwalk design, would likely cost \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Area B has committed \$100,000 in community works funds as a carry-over from 2019 to help with the delivery of project design services in 2020 with the remainder of the funds to be used for initial construction. A further \$100,000 in community works funds was committed in 2021 for pathway construction.

### **Legal Factors**

No 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 entire pathway project will involve continued collaboration with the following agencies:

- Town of Comox
- MOTI
- Co-Management Committee for the Lazo Marsh-North East Comox Conservation Area.

The K'omoks First Nation are aware of the project and will continue to be updated in regards to its status.

### **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 Electoral Areas Services Committee a delegation presented concerns related to pedestrian safety along Lazo Road between Butchers Road and Gage Road. These concerns were brought to the attention of the province. In November of 2019, the province responded that this section of road meets the rural standards to which it was constructed and that it has been identified as a future priority. This letter is attached as Appendix A.

On April 27, 2020 the CVRD received a letter (dated March 27, 2020) from the Friends of Comox-Lazo Forest Reserve Society requesting that the CVRD consider moving forward on its own with the project design within the regional district boundaries. This letter is attached as Appendix B.

Attachments: Appendix A – “Nov 20, 2019 letter – Claire Trevena, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure”  
Appendix B – “March 27, 2020 letter – Barbara Price, Friends of Comox-Lazo Forest Reserve Society”



Rec'd: 20191120  
 File: 6120-01  
 Directors Site  
 RDyson  
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NOV 20 2019

Bob Wells, Chair  
 Comox Valley Regional District  
 600 Comox Road  
 Courtenay BC V9N 3P6

Reference: 289334  
 Your File: 6120.01

Dear Chair Wells,

**Re: Lazo Road**

Thank you for your letter requesting an expansion of the planned repaving project along Lazo Road to include the portion of the corridor between Gage and Butchers roads. I am sorry it has taken me so long to reply.

As you may know, the ministry has reviewed the entire Lazo Road corridor and prioritized three projects based on the available budget and need. The first project includes the segment between Simba and Guthrie roads, and the ministry will be repaving this portion of Lazo Road and adding a 1.5-metre paved shoulder next year. Existing trails border each side of the project area, and I understand the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) intends to connect these trails by installing a multi-use path in the ministry's right-of-way once the paving is completed.

While I recognize you would like the section of Lazo Road between Gage and Butchers roads included in next year's repaving project, this segment has been identified as a future priority on Lazo Road as well as the Knight Road area.

The ministry now includes wider shoulders for cyclists and pedestrians in all new construction and rehabilitation projects, where feasible. Lazo Road was constructed to a rural standard, and although the section between Gage and Butchers roads meets this standard, we recognize the issues you raise. Our maintenance contractors recently removed several trees from the corner of Lazo Road at Gage Road to improve sightlines and will continue to ensure the road is kept in good driveable condition for the safety for all road users.

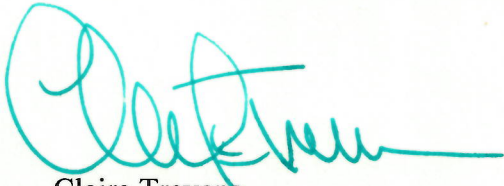
The ministry looks forward to continuing to improve the Lazo Road corridor for residents as funding allows, and to working with the CVRD to enable the completion of further paths in our rights-of-way. Should you have any questions about the projects or want to discuss this matter, please feel free to contact Project Manager Stuart Johnson. He can be reached at 250 734-4829 or at [Stuart.Johnson@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Stuart.Johnson@gov.bc.ca) and would be pleased to help you.

I have also taken the liberty of sharing your concerns regarding speeding traffic along Lazo Road with my colleague, the Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, as law enforcement falls under his ministry's jurisdiction.

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Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Claire Trevena', with a large initial 'C' and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Claire Trevena  
Minister

Copy to: Mike Farnworth, Minister  
Public Safety and Solicitor General

Ronna-Rae Leonard  
MLA, Courtenay-Comox

Stuart Johnson, Project Manager  
Vancouver Island District

Shawn Haley, Operations Manager  
Vancouver Island District

330 Butchers Road  
Comox, BC, V9N 3W6

March 27, 2020

Dear Mark Harrison

I write in support of the Lazo Greenway. This is an important link and long overdue. The demand for safe walking trails is growing rapidly. The Lazo Greenway connects to the Comox-Lazo Wildlife Conservation Area and takes walkers and cyclists off an increasingly busy and dangerous road.

It is unfortunate that the Town of Comox has postponed detailed planning of their section. However, it is the Comox valley Regional District's section which is most in need of corridor identification and consultation with adjoining owners. This project would be a good candidate for grant funding and it would be very advantageous to have the design completed and shovel ready for grant programs next year.

On behalf of the Friends of Comox-Lazo forest Reserve Society, I strongly urge that planning for this essential link, remains in the Regional District work plan for 2020.

With all good wishes,

Barbara Price  
President  
Friends of Comox-Lazo Forest Reserve Society  
250-339 4037