

TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Official Community Plan Amendment to Incorporate Active
Transportation Planning**

Electoral Area G

Project Summary

To prioritize and implement upgrades to infrastructure for active transportation within the French Creek Growth Containment Boundary area of Electoral Area 'G', the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is initiating a project to amend the Electoral Area 'G' Official Community Plan Bylaw 1540, 2008 (OCP). While the OCP currently contains a strategy for desirable active transportation links, the amendment will update the policies and mapping with options for improvements and implementation of active transportation infrastructure. The OCP requires more detailed objectives and actions for active transportation for priority areas, identification of specific barriers and obstacles associated with non-motorized transportation, and recommendations for policy development to improve opportunities and remove barriers.

The RDN will be engaging a qualified consultant to undertake the project, which will include tasks to:

- Identify existing active transportation conditions;
- Plan and lead a public consultation process regarding active transportation in the community;
- Identify and evaluate options for creation or improvement of active transportation facilities;
- Recommend policies, maps and an implementation strategies suitable for inclusion in the Official Community Plan

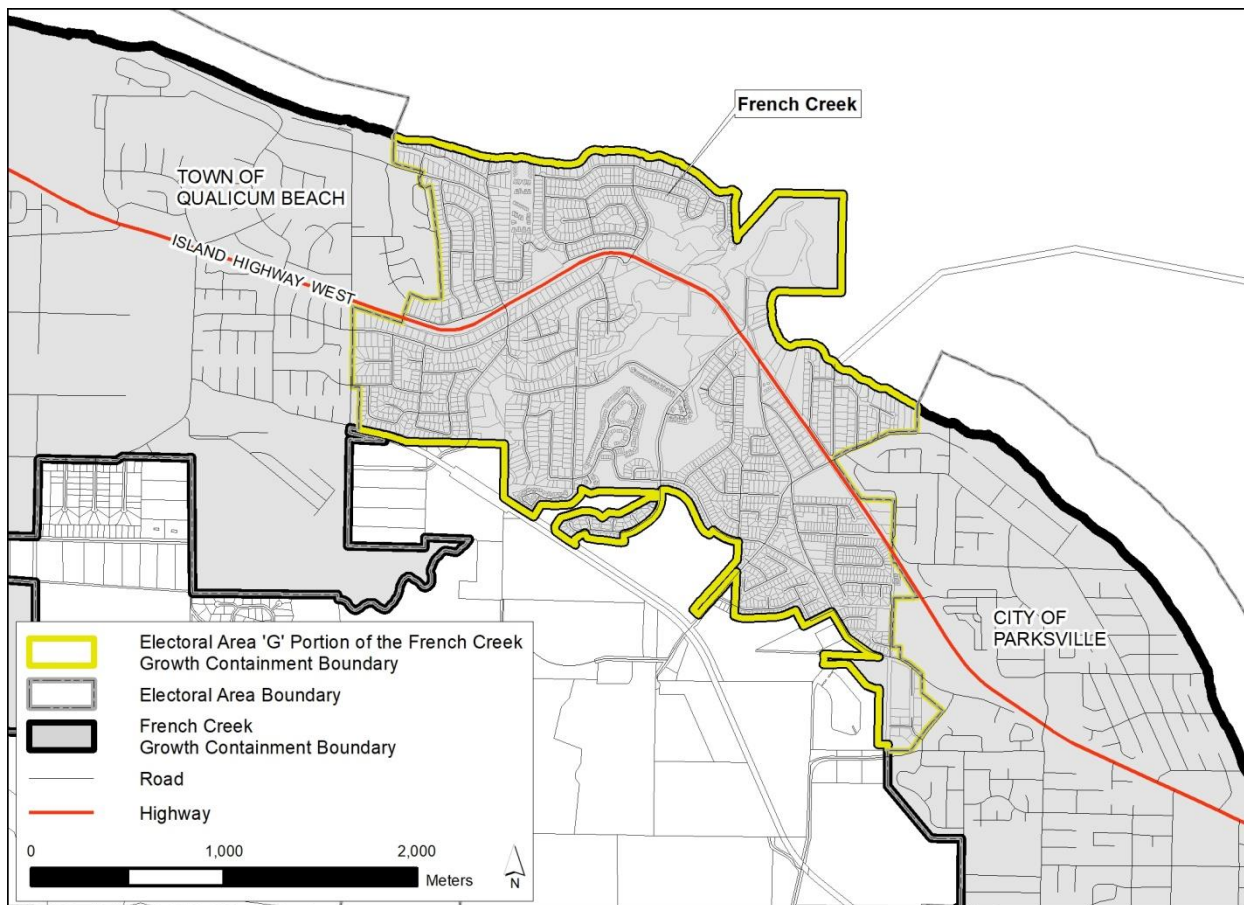


Figure 1: French Creek Growth Containment Boundary (to be replaced)

Background

Electoral Area 'G' is an unincorporated area within the RDN, including the communities of French Creek, Dashwood, and San Pareil. The French Creek Rural Village Centre is defined by the Growth Containment Boundary designated within the OCP and Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). This area is situated between the municipal boundaries of both the City of Parksville and Town of Qualicum Beach. In 2016 at the last census the population of Area 'G' was 7,465 people with a median age of 58.5 years. Population density is relatively high for an electoral area at 151 people per square kilometer.

French Creek is one of the few Rural Village Centres that are serviced by community water, community sewer and transit services. Given the higher density and available services, French Creek is one of the few Rural Villages that have the resources and characteristics of a 'complete compact community' envisioned by the RGS. Despite 'urban densities' of French Creek, the road infrastructure was constructed to a rural standard without sidewalks or wide shoulders for pedestrians. Without ownership and authority over roads, the RDN relies on the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to implement or approve active transportation infrastructure within the road right of way.

As Area 'G' is situated between Qualicum Beach and Parksville, French Creek residents rely on transportation networks and services in the neighbouring municipalities. Currently, the Parksville Qualicum Links provides an active transportation network through 13 kilometres of road and trail through suburban area and a pedestrian / cyclist bridge over French Creek. While the network contains signage and is mostly low traffic in many locations, there is no demarcation for a roadside or off-road trail and active transportation infrastructure. Major roads also lack safe routes for pedestrian and cyclists between the municipalities, including many portions of Highway 19A where the shoulder is narrow and speed limits range from 60 to 70 km/h. A new pedestrian connection is also necessary over French Creek on Highway 19A as the existing bridge is narrow for both cyclists and pedestrians.

The only school within the French Creek area is Oceanside Elementary School. The school is bordered by the Island Highway 19A and Wembley Road, both of which experience large volumes of traffic. Improvements by the Province of BC were made to Wembley Road in 2015 due to concerns for children's safety. However pedestrian safety and traffic is still a concern in the area.

Policy Context

The active transportation amendment to the OCP is expected to be consistent with and supportive of the bylaws, plans, policies and initiatives that have been completed to date including the following:

- [Community Energy and Emissions Plan](#) (2013)
- [Community Parks and Trails Strategic Plan](#) (2013) including associated maps and plans
- [Regional Growth Strategy](#) (2011)
- [Regional Parks and Trails Plan 2005-2015](#)
- [Electoral Area 'G' Official Community Plan](#) (2008) (Maps 4 – [Parkland](#) and 8 – [Mobility Options](#))

The Area 'G' Official Community Plan, Regional Parks and Trails Plan, and Community Parks and Trails Strategic Plan contain policies and mapping to provide direction on desirable active transportation projects and links within French Creek. The strategies outline roadside routes, highway improvements, infrastructure, and trails that link neighbourhoods with parks, schools, waterfront areas, and neighbourhood centres.

The active transportation amendment to the OCP will consider the guides and manuals that apply to roads and highways in electoral areas:

- British Columbia Active Transportation Design Guide (2019)
- Pedestrian Crossing Control manual for British Columbia

The BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) has jurisdiction over roads and infrastructure within the road right-of-ways. Policies in the OCP and subsequent infrastructure proposed for road right-of ways will be developed in collaboration with MOTI.

Active transportation in French Creek will also take into account Integration with transit and active travel to schools.

Official Community Plan

An OCP describes a long-term vision for the future and a course of action to achieve it. The course of action is described in objectives and policies to guide land use, servicing, and physical, social and economic changes in the community over the long term. The current OCP was adopted in 2008, replacing many OCPs for smaller areas into a single Plan for Area 'G'. The following excerpts from the Community Values Statement in the current OCP shaped the existing policies and will influence the incorporation of an active transportation amendment:

- The community values the current amount of green space and outdoor recreational opportunities within Electoral Area 'G';
- The community values the recognition and protection of the distinct neighbourhoods within Electoral Area 'G';
- The community values the management of growth and change through comprehensive land use policy and zoning regulations;
- The community values implementation of the community vision through action; and
- The community values involvement in the planning process.

Section 9.0 – Improved Mobility and associated Maps 4 (Parkland) and Map 8 (Mobility,) proposes to create sustainable communities by reducing reliance on cars through improved mobility options. Direction in the OCP is for centralized locations for shops, services and gathering places in neighbourhood centres and mixed use areas linked to neighbourhoods through walkways and bikeways; thereby reducing the dependence of residents on personal vehicles. For active forms of transportation, Section 9 identifies a strategy for bicycle routes on road right-of-ways and walkway networks linking neighbourhoods with parks, recreational opportunities, waterfront areas, community focal features, and neighbourhood centres.

The OCP Objectives are:

1. Provide safe pedestrian, wheelchair, and bicycle trails and linkages throughout the community.
2. Link neighbourhoods to community focal features, schools, churches, shops and services, public transit, parks, greenways and the waterfront.
3. Ensure linkage to bikeways and trail systems in the City of Parksville and the Town of Qualicum Beach.
4. Provide suitable and safe trail crossings of French Creek, Englishman River, and Little Qualicum River.

The OCP Policies are:

1. The bicycle and trail routes as illustrated on Map Nos. 4 and 8 of this Plan are supported in Electoral Area 'G'. The Ministry of Transportation is encouraged to provide a safe place for cycling and pedestrian passage along bicycle and trail routes that are adjacent to public roadways.
2. The priority for bicycle and trail routes will be to link neighbourhoods with parks, schools, waterfront areas, community focal features, neighbourhood centres, and mixed use areas.
3. Proposed walking routes/trails on Map No. 8 (Mobility Options and Road Network Plan) are deemed vital to Electoral Area 'G'. Any development proposals which propose to omit the provision or construction of walking routes/trails where identified pursuant to Map No. 8 are not supported.
4. The development of a walkway adjacent to and connecting with the French Creek Bridge is supported.
5. The development of an underpass/walkway under the French Creek Bridge to facilitate cyclists and pedestrians crossing under the highway is supported.
6. The Regional District of Nanaimo will work in conjunction with the City of Parksville and the Town of Qualicum Beach to ensure that bicycle routes and trails are linked with the trails and bikeways in adjoining urban areas and are constructed to compatible standards.
7. A mixed use linear corridor connection within the Transportation Corridor (E&N Railway) is supported.
8. The establishment of bicycle stands for securing bicycles in parks and neighbourhood centres is supported.
9. A pedestrian boardwalk/walkway to provide sufficient public access along the shoreline and estuary is required as part of a historical development approval condition adjacent to French Creek Harbour. Notwithstanding this policy, the boardwalk/walkway must be developed in an environmentally responsible way and must not have a negative impact on French Creek and the associated riparian vegetation.

The OCP emphasizes that these projects identified on Map 4 and Map 8 are 'vital' to Area 'G' and development proposals would not be supported where the infrastructure is omitted. Proposed projects include a roadside trail along Highway 19A and pedestrian bridge over French Creek which will enhance connections between Parksville, French Creek and Qualicum Beach. While the active transportation projects and existing road side trail routes (including Parksville-Qualicum Beach links) are conceptually

presented, the OCP did not include any evaluation of the condition, feasibility, cost, or implementation of the infrastructure.

Regional Park and Trails Plan

The Regional Parks and Trails Plan was prepared to define the future direction, policies, priorities and actions for the Regional District over 10 years (2005-2015). Through this Plan the Parkville Qualicum Beach Links were identified as a priority for road marking, garbage and landscaping maintenance, engineering bridge inspections and bridge replacement or repair funding. An updated Regional and Community Parks and Trails Plan is currently being prepared.

Community Parks and Trails Strategic Plan for Electoral Areas E, F, G & H

The Community Parks and Trails Strategic Plan (CPTS) provides a systematic approach to parks and trails planning and development at the community level, including an inventory of existing or proposed community parks, criteria for selecting potential parks, and identifying priorities for acquisition. Through public consultation, the CPTS includes a vision statement for each electoral area, which for Area 'G' is as follows:

“A vibrant community where residents can easily access community parks and other destinations using a system of inter-connected trails that provides for recreation, social interaction and nature appreciation.”

With respect to active transportation infrastructure, the CPTS classifies linear parks with the primary function to provide trail connectivity to community destination through active transportation (see Table below).

Table 1: Community Parks and Trails Strategic Plan (Linear Park Classification)

Function	
Primary Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail connectivity to community destinations through active transportation
Secondary Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to natural areas Emergency access/egress
Criteria	
Useable Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 4.0m on cleared sites Minimum 10m where significant trees are present
Max. Slope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2% preferred trail slope for accessible trails 5% max. slope over long distances for accessible trails Where slopes exceed 5%, landings required for accessible trails Slopes may be steeper in backcountry trails Switchbacks or steps on steep lands
Shape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linear
Encumbrances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to build hard surface pathway without encumbering

	access to underground utilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not obstructed by utility boxes, hydro, mailbox, hydrants, etc.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting key destinations
Typical Development	
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail • Signage • Fencing • Bollards • Benches

An implementation action of the CPTS is to incorporate the vision and projects into the OCP during an OCP update. The current project will need to consider the standards and direction of the CPTS.

Project Objective

The active transportation amendment will identify and evaluate options for creating or improving facilities for non-motorized transportation for the purpose of improving community health through physical activity, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by providing alternatives to vehicle use. The active transportation recommendations, including an implementation strategy, will be incorporated into the Electoral Area 'G' Official Community Plan.

The French Creek area is a common connection route between the Town of Qualicum Beach and the City of Parksville. Walking and cycling are common in the area due to the close proximity of community amenities: public transit hubs and routes, recreation facilities, parks, grocery stores, markets, elementary and high schools, senior's housing, and parks or green space. Knowledge that will be generated through this project will assist in identifying the best ways to approach barriers and obstacles based on resident's needs.

Project Scope

The Active Transportation Plan will be adopted as an amendment to the Electoral Area 'G' Official Community Plan. The tasks identified below outline the project scope and shall be used as a guide for the qualified consultant and RDN staff to develop an active transportation amendment to the Official Community Plan.

Table 2: Area G Project Scope and Tasks

1. Collect and review background information and data
2. Identify existing active transportation conditions
3. Undertake a public consultation process including at minimum:
a. An engagement event for Area 'G' that complies with Ministerial Order No. M139 ¹

¹ Local Government Meetings and Bylaw Process (COVID-19) Order No. 3

b. Online engagement through RDN 'Get Involved' website

c. Key stakeholder engagement including but not limited to:

- Senior housing residents
- Local business community
- Community groups, clubs and organizations
- Community amenity and facility users
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- Neighbouring municipalities
- School District 69
- Oceanside Cycling Coalition
- Community Associations
- RDN Recreation and Parks
- RDN Transit

4. Propose a long-term active transportation network

Includes infrastructure and improvements needed to realize the long term network

5. Develop an implementation strategy

- Includes priorities, timelines, responsible agencies, cost, and development

6. Undertake bylaw adoption process

Community Engagement

Through public and stakeholder engagement, this project will engage community members on active transportation; inclusive of students, seniors and people with differing abilities. A desired outcome is to receive recommendations on the objectives and actions for policy development that removes barriers to active transportation for area residents.

The RDN Public Engagement Policy guides the engagement process and applies to all employees, volunteers and contractors of the RDN. Outlined in this policy, the RDN maintains a commitment to engagement that recognizes the value that public engagement provides. In particular, that people desire to participate in decisions that affect them; effective participation facilitates understanding and improves decision making. Under this policy, the RDN public engagement is based on three foundations:

- Values-based:** meaningful participation is focused on talking to people about what matters most to them and what matters most to you.
- Decision-oriented:** outlining the scope of issues under discussion to purposefully come to a conclusion or decision over the course of a process.
- Goal-driven:** outlining the public's role and potential to influence the issues under discussion with clear objectives of what will be achieved. For example, information is communicated, input or feedback is sought or collaborative development is desired.

Schedule / Project Timeline

Table 3 Active Transportation OCP Amendment Timeline

Milestone / Task	Schedule
Award Contract	May 2021
Research and Public Engagement	May – September, 2021
Draft Report and Review	October, 2021
Final Report and Public Information Meeting	November, 2021
Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 1 st and 2 nd reading	January 2022
Public Hearing	February 2022
Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 3 rd reading	March 2022
Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw Adoption	April 2022

Budget & Resources

The project will be undertaken by a qualified consultant under the guidance of an RDN planner. The total budget for the project is \$85,000. The RDN has received \$10,000 in funding from the Union of BC Municipalities and \$75,000 is being provided from Community Works Funds.

Table 4 Active Transportation OCP Amendment Outline

Project Expense	UBCM Funding	RDN Funding
Conduct active transportation assessment, community audit, data collection	\$5,000	\$16,000
Consultant to conduct engagement sessions	\$2,000	\$16,000
Consultant and RDN to facilitate online engagement		\$8,000
Advertising and graphic design		\$6,000
Facilitate project management and interdepartmental meetings		\$6,000
Consultant to prepare objectives, actions and recommendations for amendment	\$3,000	\$13,000
Completion and presentation of project findings to RDN Board		\$5,000
Implementation of recommendations		\$2,500
Education and engagement		\$2,500

Final Deliverable

The qualified consultant will provide a report detailing existing conditions for active transportation, barriers associated with non-motorized transportation, recommendations for policy development to improve opportunities and remove barrier in the form of a revision to Section 9 of the OCP and an associated implementation strategy.