

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 9, 2019

PUBLIC OWNED RECREATIONAL TRAIL AT RISK

***Columbia and Western Rail Trail is part of The Great Trail of Canada,
(formally known as the Trans Canada Trail)***

Recreation Sites and Trails BC is proposing to cancel the recreation trail designation for a 67km section of the Columbia and Western Rail Trail and turn it into a road tenure. This is a precedent threatening rails trails and The Great Trail of Canada. The 164 km Columbia and Western Rail Trail runs between Castlegar and Midway, British Columbia was given to the Province by Trans Canada Trail for non-motorized use in 2004.

The Columbia and Western Rail Trail is a spectacular experience for active outdoor recreation and a public asset that should not be turned into an industrial road. “If the KVR Rail Trail, which includes the Columbia and Western Rail Trail, between Hope and Castlegar were properly funded and managed as a linear greenway or as a linear Provincial Park, we could have an epic low carbon recreational rail trail in south central British Columbia. Turning this rail trail into a road is a real step backward for the many B.C. residents who enjoy cycling, walking and rolling for recreation”, said Ciel Sander, Board President of the Trails Society of BC.

Already, residents are having difficulty finding high quality cycling trails in B.C. They instead are often flying to Europe, the USA or other provinces for their cycling holidays. This both significantly increases their GHG emissions and deprives smaller B.C. communities of badly needed economic activity.

Trails Society of BC has been urging Recreation Sites and Trails BC to properly manage the Provincial rail trails. Instead, without any public consultation or oversight, the trail has been overrun with motorized vehicles destroying the surface making dangerous and difficult to cycle and walk on. People have been gaining off road vehicle (ORV) access to these rail trails in addition to driving trucks and cars, displacing active trail users these rail trails were established for.

The public should have a say in what the future looks like for this public rail trail. Turning this rail trail into a public road means increased motor vehicle use, more forestry permit and sets a precedent for

recreational rail trails in BC. Once a section of our publicly owned rail trail is turned into a road, there is no going back.

The recently released *Report on the Budget 2020 Consultation* highlighted the concerns of several organizations regarding non-motorized trails and included the following recommendation to “Increase operational funding for BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC to support staffing, monitoring and enforcement, maintenance, public safety, and recreational infrastructure“. With the BC Trails Strategy currently being updated and the potential for more funding, this is not the proper time to even consider downgrading a rail trail to a dusty industrial road.

We need your help to ask for a robust public engagement process to determine the future of our rail trails in British Columbia.

Send an email message to John Hawkings, recinfo@gov.bc.ca Director of Recreation Sites and Trails BC now with subject line “CWRT change in administration comments” and tell him:

- 1.) You do not want to see the Columbia and Western Rail Trail de-listed as a Recreation Trail and turned into a roadway.
- 2.) Motorized vehicles are incompatible with active trail users who want a motor vehicle free quality experience on rail trails
- 3) Ask for a proper public engagement with a set of alternatives, and for an extended public consultation period.

Please send a copy of your email to trailsbc@trailsbc.ca

Trails Society of BC is a volunteer Society established in 1994 to assist the Provincial Government in establishing the Trans Canada Trail, since renamed, The Great Trail of Canada. Trails Society of BC advocates for quality trail experiences for active recreation and transportation on greenway trails in British Columbia. Go to www.trailsbc.ca