



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Briefing Note

To: Council

File No.: 5335-20

From: Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Engineering

Date: April 15, 2026

Subject: "Lake Trail Multi-Use Pathway Project Update"

PURPOSE: The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on the status of the second phase of the Lake Trail Multi-Use Path project.

BACKGROUND:

The Lake Trail Multi-Use Pathway project is an initiative to improve safety and connectivity between Lake Trail Community School and Arden Elementary School. The project will construct a dedicated 2.0 m wide gravel path, improved bike facilities, and related road and drainage upgrades. Supporting a priority route in the City's Cycling Network Plan and Transportation Master Plan.

Council supported moving the project forward, including backing grant applications in 2021 and 2022, and in 2024 the city secured \$500,000 from the Province's Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants program and \$186,000 of funding from the neighboring CVRD Electoral Area A.

In 2024, environmental assessment identified that portions of the corridor, including roadside ditching along the frontage of the Courtenay Fellowship Baptist Church (2693 Lake Trail Road), intersect a fish-bearing and environmentally sensitive area of Arden Creek. This includes critical habitat for the endangered Morrison Creek population of Western brook lamprey and known habitat for Chinook and Coho salmon. These findings triggered additional federal permitting under the Fisheries Act and Species at Risk Act and required further investigations and design refinements, increasing project complexity and timelines.

To keep the project moving while permitting continued for the environmentally sensitive areas, the work was split into two phases:

- **Phase 1 (completed November 2025):** Delivered 620 m of gravel multi-use pathway, upgraded north-side bike lanes, an improved school bus stop, and drainage upgrades.
- **Phase 2 (proposed 2026):** Includes the remaining trail construction of the 1.3 km corridor along the north side of Lake Trail Road between Webb Road to Arden Road as well as other cycling improvements and drainage upgrades. This phase also includes instream and riparian improvements to Arden Creek..

DISCUSSION:

Phase 2 construction is planned to proceed in June 2026 and will complete the active transportation link along Lake Trail Road by connecting the previously completed works in Phase 1 and providing a continuous multi-use pathway between Lake Trail Community School and Arden Elementary. The project will deliver a safe and functional route that is physically separated from traffic, improving comfort and accessibility for students, families, pedestrians, and cyclists. Supporting works, including culvert extensions, headwall

installation, ditch modifications, and riparian vegetation removal and replacement, are also included in the scope to complete the corridor improvements.

As design development progressed, laEE and Operations staff undertook a detailed review of the original scope to ensure it remains aligned with Council's active transportation objectives, delivery risk, cost certainty, and broader policy direction. Based on that review, staff are recommending that the road widening be reduced and the project proceed within the existing roadway footprint, rather than as a combined roadway widening and active transportation project.

From an operational perspective, the work is limited to an expansion of the paved road surface within the existing road cross-section, rather than a change in use or regulatory framework. This approach is consistent with how similar improvements were delivered between Arden Road and Willemar Avenue and does not introduce new operational responsibilities beyond standard roadway construction and maintenance considerations.

There are several clear benefits to this scope refinement that we are emphasizing in the report:

- **Cost and delivery certainty:** Removing road widening eliminates significant costs associated with curb realignment, drainage and utility adjustments, and potential property impacts. This materially improves project affordability and reduces delivery risk.
- **Environmental and community impact reduction:** Limiting the project to the existing footprint minimizes ground disturbance, material use, and construction duration, reducing impacts to adjacent properties, boulevard trees, and corridor users.
- **Constructability and timing:** A narrower scope shortens construction timelines and disruption, allowing the active transportation improvements to be delivered more efficiently.

Importantly, the revised scope does not compromise the long-term corridor design intent. The Lake Trail resurfacing program scheduled for 2027 provides a more appropriate and cost-effective opportunity to implement surface-level width reallocation through painted travel lanes and bike lanes. Delivering this component through pavement markings rather than physical widening aligns with current complete streets practice and allows us to achieve the intended cross-section without incremental roadway expansion.

This approach is consistent with the existing Lake Trail corridor condition between Arden Road and Willemar Avenue, where similar roadway widths and surface treatments were implemented before the capital project. Aligning the current project with this established condition supports corridor consistency.



(Figure 1 – Map showing project boundary)



(Figure 2 – Phase-1 Completed MUP)

Proposed Phase 2 Schedule:

The proposed schedule is shown below which has been prepared by Staff. Once the construction contract is awarded, the contractor will be responsible for the project schedule. Listed below are some key considerations in the schedule:

Task	Feb 2026	Mar 2026	Apr 2026	May 2026	Jun 2026	Jul 2026	Aug 2026	Sep 2026	Nov 2026-2027
Permitting/Consultation									
Tendering/Procurement									
Contract Award									
Construction									
Contractor Maintenance									

Environmental permitting continues to be the key factor guiding delivery of the Lake Trail Multi-Use Pathway project. As outlined above, several portions of the remaining work intersect with fish-bearing and environmentally sensitive areas of Arden Creek, including designated critical habitat for the endangered Morrison Creek population of Western brook lamprey. These findings triggered regulatory requirements under the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act (SARA), and the Water Sustainability Act (WSA). Staff have now completed all required technical assessments, instream habitat evaluations, and offsetting plans, and the FAA application package has been formally submitted and approved by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

There are 5 sections in this project that involve in-stream and riparian works that DFO requires to be completed during the least-risk timing window in August to minimize impacts to sensitive lamprey and salmon life stages. The instream restoration and habitat restoration is planned for this time as well.

Consideration of Sanderson Curbs:

Lake Trail Road is classified as a rural arterial (minor) and designated truck route used by large vehicles to access the highway as well as farm equipment and other users of the road.

The Cycling Network Plan (CNP) update completed in 2023 identified painted buffered bike lanes for Lake Trail Road. This supports Council’s earlier decision to proceed with a 2.0 metre gravel multi-use path to reduce environmental impacts while still providing a separated pedestrian route and an on-road cycling connection. Together, the multi-use path and painted buffered bike lanes meet the intended level of active transportation service.

At the July 2025 Council meeting, Council enquired about the potential use of Sanderson curbs or other physical separators to enhance cycling safety. Because Lake Trail Road is a rural arterial road and designated truck route combined with its open ditch drainage system, the use of Sanderson curbs presents operational challenges. These constraints include impacts to drainage, maintenance access, winter operations, and emergency pull-off opportunities.

Operations is considering the future potential use of Sanderson curbs. A trial deployment is planned at select locations in 2026 to evaluate durability, maintenance requirements, and operational impacts. Staff will report back to Council with recommendations following the trial period. In the interim, targeted safety enhancements such as flexible delineators at intersections, crosswalks, or conflict points may be used where visibility and user guidance can be improved without compromising road function.

Staff also continue to monitor potential long-term considerations related to Lake Trail Road within the upcoming Strategic Transportation Plan (STP), including road classification and the potential for farm-use designation. These future decisions may influence the long-term cross-section and operational expectations for this corridor.

Offsetting and Monitoring

DFO requires in-stream and riparian works to be completed during the least-risk timing window in August to minimize impacts to sensitive lamprey and salmon life stages (e.g., spawning and emergence). As a condition of permitting, habitat offsetting measures must be implemented, which include rock riffle installation, gravel nourishment, large woody debris placement, and riparian planting. These works will include one year of contractor maintenance following Substantial Completion.

The city will also retain a qualified environmental professional to complete a five-year monitoring program for the offsetting measures. Monitoring will include a Year 0 (post-construction) report in 2026, followed by annual monitoring and reporting from 2027 to 2031 (Years 0,1, 2, 3, and 5). The monitoring program will include:

- Riparian survivorship surveys (target: >85%)
- In-stream habitat inspections to confirm riffles, woody debris, and gravels remain stable and functional
- Annual reporting to DFO and implementation of corrective actions as needed (e.g., replanting, gravel replenishment)

As required by DFO, staff have provided an irrevocable letter of credit to guarantee completion of the offsetting measures.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The Lake Trail Multi-Use Path Project is consistent with the City's Official Community Plan (OCP), Transportation Master Plan (TMP), Cycling Network Plan (CNP), and Arden Corridor Local Area Plan (LAP). These policies support improved walking and cycling connections along Lake Trail Road and recognize the corridor as an important link between Lake Trail Community School and Arden Elementary School.

The City's master plan documents recognize that improvements along this corridor must respond to existing site constraints, including the rural road character, open ditches, mature trees, and environmentally sensitive areas associated with Arden Creek. Consistent with that direction, Phase 2 has been designed with a reduced 2.0 m multi-use path and buffered bike lanes rather than protected bike lanes. This approach reflects the corridor constraints identified through the planning work and is a deliberate response to the context of the corridor.

Phase 2 is also subject to federal and provincial regulatory requirements due to its proximity to fish-bearing and environmentally sensitive habitat within the Arden Creek corridor. As a result, the project must comply with the Fisheries Act, Species at Risk Act, and Water Sustainability Act as part of the project delivery.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Based on staff recommendation, Council increased the project budget to reflect added environmental permitting requirements, design changes, statutory right-of-way costs, and higher construction costs associated with environmental mitigation.

The following tables summarize the current financial position of the project. Table 1 provides an overview of the overall budget position, including 2025 expenditures, carry-forward funding, the 2026 available budget, and the estimated cost to complete Phase 2.

Table-1 Project Financial Summary 2026

2026 Budget	\$1,277,800
Total Estimated 2026 Phase 2 Cost	\$1,077,240
Estimated Budget Remaining	\$200,560

Included in the estimated costs for this project are the construction of the project, contract administration and site inspection and Statutory Right of Way costs. Final project costs may also be affected by tender pricing, field conditions, and any changes to permit requirements arising through regulatory review.

The cost estimates for Phase 2 include the reductions of the road widening as noted in earlier sections Table 2 outlines grant and external funding sources being used to fund Phase 2 of the project.

Table-2 Phase 2 Funding Sources 2026

BC Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant	\$282,615
CVRD contribution	\$186,000
Reserves – Asset Management	\$250,000
Prior year taxation carry forward	\$294,685
Current year taxation	\$264,500
Total Funding	\$1,277,800

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

laEE staff will continue to manage Phase 2 of the Lake Trail Multi-Use Pathway project, including permitting, procurement, contractor coordination, and the required agency and Indigenous engagement. Finance has also supported project delivery through issuance of the letter of credit required by DFO for the habitat offsetting measures.

Project delivery will include implementation of habitat offsetting measures, one year of contractor maintenance following substantial completion, and a five-year environmental monitoring and reporting program managed by the Capital Projects team in coordination with the consultant and a Qualified Environmental Professional.

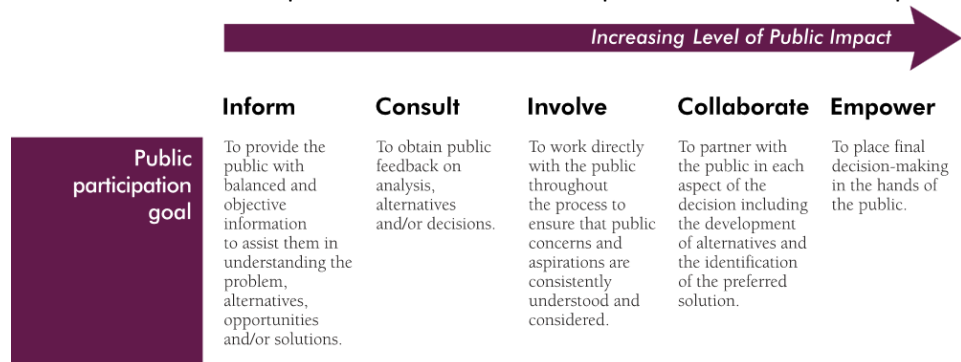
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

Phase 2 of the Lake Trail Multi-Use Path Project aligns with Council’s 2023–2026 Strategic Priorities for Streets and Transportation by improving walking and cycling infrastructure along Lake Trail Road, strengthening connections to Lake Trail Community School and Arden Elementary School, and supporting safer, lower-carbon travel options. It also reflects Council’s direction to implement the Official Community Plan through capital projects that improve mobility in the community. In addition, the project supports Council’s Natural Environment priorities through habitat offsetting and riparian restoration works within the Arden Creek corridor that are intended to protect and improve sensitive fish habitat.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public engagement for Phase 2 of the Lake Trail Multi-Use Path is planned primarily at the Inform level of the IAP2 Spectrum, with a limited Consult component for directly affected property owners, residents, and businesses. Staff have started targeted outreach to impacted properties and will continue direct communication regarding temporary easements, frontage and parking impacts, and construction timing. Broader public updates will be provided through neighbourhood letters, the City’s website, signage, social media, media releases, and notices at key construction milestones. Updates will also be shared with school communities, BC Transit, Comox Valley Schools, the CVRD, and other affected agencies and user groups. A public event is also planned at project completion. Active transportation data was also collected prior to construction and will continue to be gathered post-construction to confirm usage counts.

Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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RECOMMENDATION: THAT Council receive the "Lake Trail Multi-Use Pathway Project Update" briefing note.

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