



KETTLE VALLEY RAIL TRAIL MASTER PLAN

ACTIVATING THE TOURISM POTENTIAL
FROM MILE ZERO TO GLENFIR





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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *Kettle Valley Trail Master Plan: Midway to Glenfir* was championed by the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association and assembled by the consulting team from McElhanney Consulting Services Ltd. and RC Strategies + PERC. The plan has been prepared for the consideration of the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development.

The project team would especially like to thank staff from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, British Columbia Parks, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, Regional District of Central Okanagan, Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, the member governments of the Okanagan Nation Alliance, all recreation and trail clubs and organizations and the thousands of tenure holders, private landowners, trails users and residents that took the time to share their stories, concerns and ideas about and help shape the future of the Kettle Valley Rail Trail.



McElhanney

RC
strategies



P

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA), together with many other trail advocates and stakeholders in the region, have long recognized the tourism potential of the KVR Trail and, specifically, the Midway to Glenfir segment. This 192.5 km long segment of the trail is seamlessly connected, easily accessible, contains easy grades, boasts some of the most stunning scenery available anywhere along the KVR corridor and provides immediate access to unique and inspiring visitor attractions. Within a short three-hour drive, the Midway to Glenfir segment of KVR Trail is easily accessible to nearly 602,000 people or 13% of the provincial population and an international airport. The trail's location and inherent features make it very appealing to for both local recreation enthusiasts as well as a diverse array of trails tourism markets. And, the segments strategic location allows numerous rural and Indigenous communities can easily realize the direct and indirect benefits from trails-based tourism.

Though the Thompson Okanagan region is already an international destination that generates significant

benefits to host communities, the rural communities in the Boundary and Similkameen located along the KVR Trail have yet to fully benefit from the region's visitor economy. This is due, in part, to limited tourism infrastructure and susceptibility to strong swings in visitor seasonality. Since the trains stopped running, much of the Midway to Glenfir portion of the KVR corridor has served as a relatively ad-hoc local recreational resource and an informal regional transportation corridor. Despite its well-known potential to be a world-class experience and incredible local recreation opportunity, limited attention has been focused on realizing the trail's place as a strategic provincial asset for rural economic development and diversification.

Glimpses of the full tourism potential of the trail can be experienced by those who visit the Myra Canyon in Myra Bellevue Provincial Park or enlist the services of one of the few tour operators serving the trail. However, in general, this segment of the KVR Trail is not market or export ready and is falling well short of its potential to be a world-class trail experience that generates meaningful benefits to communities along the corridor. Visitor amenities and services

are minimal, market awareness is poor, branding and positioning is limited, the brand promise is potentially misleading, tread conditions are not ideal, conflicts are too frequent and, perhaps most importantly, there are few opportunities for communities to take advantage of the benefits trails tourism can bring. As a result, communities along the corridor are largely missing out on the benefits that such a strategic asset could generate. Though it has yet to reach its tourism potential, the visitor experiences that the trail could provide are in demand.

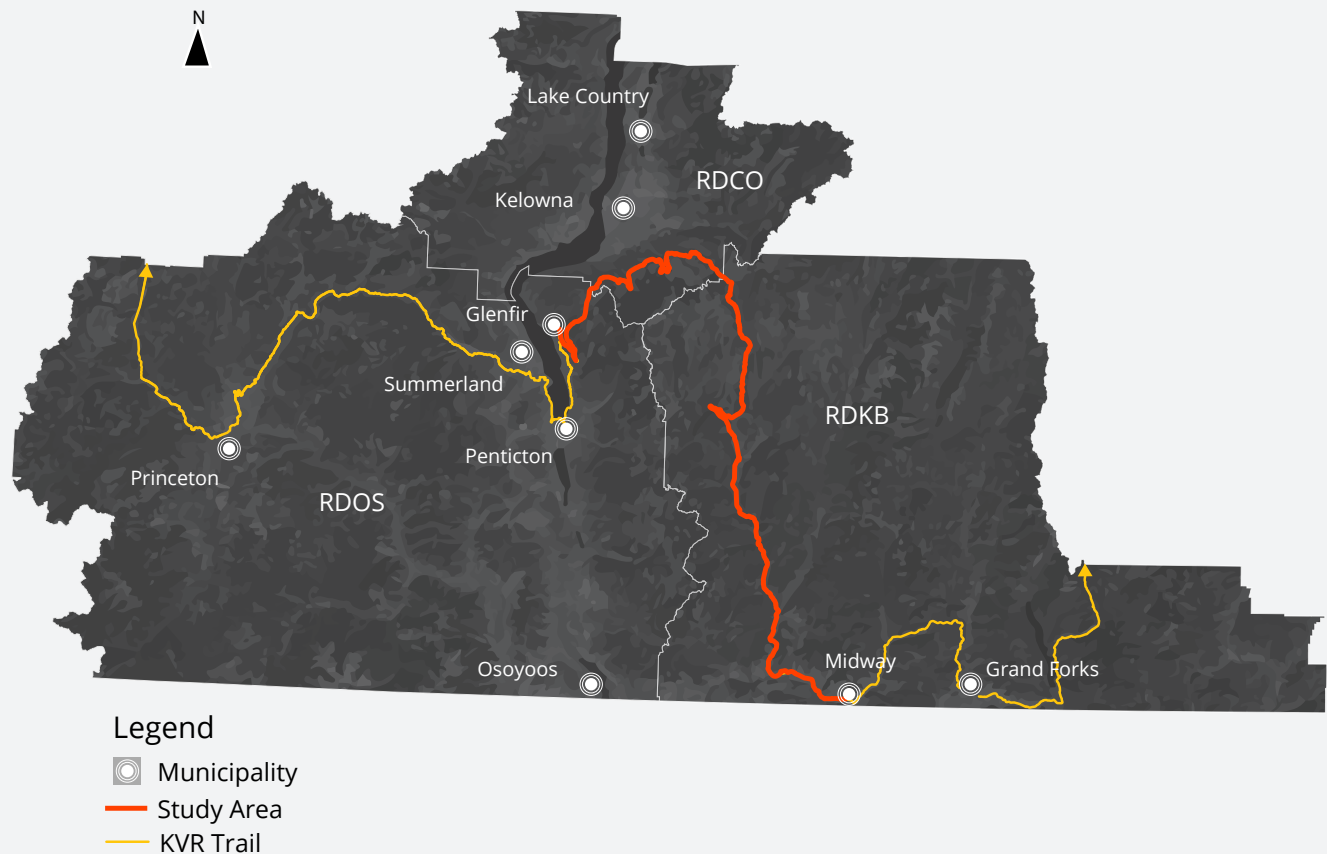
PURPOSE

Guided by the vision set in the TOTA's *Activating our Potential: Thompson Okanagan Regional Rail Trail Tourism Strategy 2016-2022*, this master plan details the priorities and actions that should be implemented to:

- Achieve a world-class export-ready trail experience and exceptional local recreation resource,
- Resolve the recreation use conflicts along the trail,
- Improve the management and integration of non-recreational use of the trail,
- Improve the trail tread, maintenance and management of the trail, and
- Mitigate the trail's potential impacts on the environment, adjacent private landowners and tenure holders.

Commissioned by TOTA, this master plan establishes a renewed direction for the future of this segment of KVR Trail. As the owner and manager of the trail, the master plan has been recommended to the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) for adoption and implementation.

▼ **Figure 1: Study Area, Regional District Boundaries and Communities**





ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

- 2,025** online survey submission
- 1,671** ideas and opinions expressed on Vertisee
- 185** Roving kiosk participants
- 53** tourism operator survey submissions
- 40+** workshop participants
- 32** landowner survey submissions
- 14** tenure holder questionnaire submissions
- 6** stakeholder meetings
- 4** meetings with Indigenous leaders

ENGAGEMENT

Though the corridor is first and foremost a recreational trail, investments in and potential changes to the management of the corridor can impact other users who, by default rather than design, use or rely on the corridor for non-recreation and tourism purposes. To ensure that the true tourism potential and recreation quality of the KVR Trail can be realized in a way that minimizes unintentional impacts to other users, a robust engagement process was held to ensure the range of uses, and interests in the trail were understood and considered. Thousands of trail users, residents, stakeholders, Indigenous communities, private land owners and staff from local, regional and the provincial government took part in the process.

THE BLUEPRINT

This master plan articulates a renewed vision for the Midway to Glenfir segment of the KVR Trail. At the foundation of the plan are 17 priorities with associated actions that need to be implemented if the vision and the trail's recreation and tourism potential is to be realized. If the plan is successfully implemented over the next ten years, the KVR Trail will be:

- A world-class export-ready visitor experience
- Actively managed for recreation and tourism
- Maximizing the benefits to local communities
- Resolved conflicts
- Minimizing undesirable environmental and cultural impacts
- Growing stewardship and local support for the trail

DESIRED OUTCOMES



**World-Class Export-Ready
Visitor Experience**



**Maximizing the Benefits
to Local Communities**



Resolved Conflicts



**Minimizing Undesirable
Environmental and
Cultural Impacts**



**Growing Stewardship
and Local Support**

VISION

The KVR trail is a world-class non-motorized long-distance trail experience. Recognized and cited by visitors as a must-experience destination, the trail inspires higher yield short and long-haul markets to choose the Thompson Okanagan Region in the peak and shoulder seasons. Visitors enjoy a range of experiences from multi-day long distance tours for the seasoned adventurer to shorter excursions suitable to the first timer. Delivering an exceptional experience to every visitor, the trail connects a fascinating mix of communities, beautiful landscapes, unique attractions, railway and settlement history, and Indigenous culture. Seamlessly integrated with other nearby visitor activities and attractions, visitors routinely extend their stay to take part in an endless mixture of outdoor recreation, nature observation, cultural, culinary, winery and event options. Embracing our region's Sustainable Tourism Destination accreditation, the trail is effectively and sustainably managed, well resourced and strongly supported by the local and regional communities through which it passes.

PRIORITIES

- Regulate the Use of the Trail
- Enhance Nearby Off-Road Vehicle Trail Networks
- Improve the Trail's Tread and Maintenance of the Trail
- Enhance the Major Gateways and Trailheads
- Make the Connections to Adjacent Communities & Off-Trail Experiences
- Enhance the Condition of the Primary Access Routes to the Trail
- Improve Signage & Wayfinding
- Diversify and Enhance the Supply of On-trail Accommodations
- Animate the Trail Experience
- Improve and Consistently Provide Comfort and Convenience Amenities
- Actively Manage Visitor Use, Impacts and Safety
- Improve the Universal Accessibility of the Trail
- Motivate Visitors to Experience the Trail and the Region to Support the Trail
- Minimize the Impacts of Trail Development and Use on Wildlife and the Environment
- Minimize Impacts of Trail Use on Adjacent Landowners & Tenure Holders
- Confirm the Governance Model & Enhance Local Partnerships & Stewardship
- Enhance Resourcing and Capacity



A NOTE FROM TOTA TO READERS

It is important to understand that much this segment of KVR Trail and corridor has been largely unmanaged for decades. In many cases, uses of the trail and corridor have evolved overtime by default, rather than conscious decisions or design. Some of those uses are well aligned with the original intent of establishing a long-distance recreation trail while others are not. In the absence of strong proactive management, a number of complex management issues have evolved and currently stand in the way of achieving the trail's full potential and ability to maximize benefits to local communities. The issues need to be resolved if the trail's tourism and recreation potential is to be maximized but the solutions are complex. Many of the identified priorities and actions in this plan are interrelated and interdependent. TOTA encourages all readers to review the plan in its entirety to ensure the full suite of priorities and actions are understood. There are certainly trade-offs that are made through this plan, but those trade-offs are recognized, and actions are identified to minimize the effects of the proposed changes on all interests.