

# ACTIVATING OUR POTENTIAL

## THOMPSON OKANAGAN REGIONAL RAIL TRAILS TOURISM STRATEGY 2016–2022

HOW DO WE CREATE AN EXCEPTIONAL  
VISITOR EXPERIENCE?

A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH...



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### INTRODUCTION

The rail trail system in the Thompson Okanagan has the potential to draw both domestic and international visitors but it will require considerable effort to elevate the visitor experience and create sustainable tourism activity and benefits for communities along these routes. The Thompson Okanagan ten-year [regional tourism strategy](#) provides the strategic framework for the development of sub-regional and community tourism plans in the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) service area. One of the five focus areas, the **Trails** strategy called for action on iconic trail development of which the Trans Canada Trail-Kettle Valley Railway (TCT-KVR) is a primary target. Therefore, TOTA, in association with its partners, has commissioned this Regional Rail Trails Tourism Strategy (the Strategy), the purpose of which is to create an export-ready tourism product.

Three major phases were followed in preparing the Strategy: a) research on the current situation of the trail, market trends and best practices in rail trails development and management, b) a consultation process with stakeholders, and finally c) a strategy compilation, report writing process. A total of 225 individuals were consulted during the study.

This strategy report, and its anticipated implementation, is a pilot project supported by Destination BC. A successful outcome for the pilot would open up the possibility of scaled expansion to other regions of the province with rail trail assets and initiatives.

The main focus of this strategy is cycling because of its market potential and suitability for all communities along the TCT-KVR route. At the same time, off-road vehicles are active on many parts of the trail and some local clubs are contributing to trail upkeep. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses are occurring, issues which are addressed in different sections throughout this report. There are recommendations for greater communication and collaboration amongst the different user groups to ensure best practices are being followed, and in addition, a recommendation for more research into off-road vehicle tourism in the Thompson Okanagan. This is seen as one way of moving discussion about tourism potential, and use management, on the TCT-KVR to a higher level, within the context of the entire trail system.

### CURRENT SITUATION

The Kettle Valley Railway was completed in 1915, starting in Midway and terminating in Hope, with subsequent major branch lines built to Spences Bridge and Osoyoos. The Columbia and Western Railway from Midway east to Castlegar and beyond, was also sometimes referred to as the KVR. Operations on these railways began winding down beginning in the 1960s, and with abandonment was designated the TCT-KVR in the 1990s. The KVR extends roughly 482 km from Hope to Midway but is approximately 824 km when branch lines are included.

The trail is primarily Crown land, under management by different provincial agencies. Use levels are not formally documented except at Myra Canyon near Kelowna, although some communities are monitoring trail use. Major communities along the route include Christina Lake, Greenwood, Grand Forks, Midway, Rock Creek, Beaverdell/Carmi, Kelowna, Naramata, Penticton, Oliver, Osoyoos, Summerland, Princeton and Merritt. Population, visitor levels and visitor services are concentrated in the south Okanagan and diminish greatly in the eastern and western flanks of the study area.

The large majority of trail use on the KVR is self-guided, but there are dozens of guide outfits and service providers catering to trail users. Visitor information can be obtained from dozens of sources from the provincial government to local visitor centres but the assemblage of materials are uncoordinated and in many cases confusing in terms of what a visitor can expect or not expect on the trail.

The market potential for the trail is high. Cycling is a top-ranked trip activity among Canadian visitors to the Thompson Okanagan, moderately less so for US and international visitors. Cycle touring, especially on rail trails, is expanding internationally, with greater premiums being placed on epic adventures. The TCT-KVR is well placed to take advantage of this growth. Its combination of landscapes, favourable grade, communities, crown ownership, dedicated trail stewards and small core of export-ready tour operations provide an excellent foundation for moving forward.

But there are also considerable challenges: a lack of basic services and amenities in many areas, highly variable trail surfaces and conditions, lack of connectivity in some areas, a proliferation of signage standards and quality, chronic shortages of funds to keep the trail useable, and resource use conflicts, mainly between motorized and non-motorized users.

The suitability of the trail as a quality rail trail experience, and therefore its marketability, differs according to the expectations and perspective of the user or visitor.

Abandoned rail lines are highly attractive recreation and transit corridors with significant potential as tourism generators. In the Thompson Okanagan this potential has only been lightly developed and it is believed with some visionary planning and more collective effort it is probable that the TCT-KVR, and other rail trails in the region, can become iconic on a world scale.



## STRATEGY DIRECTION



## ORGANIZATION

A new entity that can be a recognized leader in rail trail development in the Thompson Okanagan would greatly facilitate implementation of this Strategy. TOTA itself does not have the mandate, structure or capacity to deal with the many different facets of implementation, although it could play a lead role. The entity would focus on creating a foundation for cooperation and collaboration in a way that encourages commitment and ownership of the trail vision. At the same time, it would empower stewards and communities who at the present time are facing an uphill battle assembling the funding and capacity to keep the rail trail a realistic vision.

### Recommendations

- Trail advisory committee (for leadership in transition to a Trust)
- First-year work plan
- Local government endorsement
- Rail Trails Trust
- Policy brief on future TCT-KVR rail trail development
- Policy brief on future rail trails development
- First Nations Partnership

- MOU with First Nations
- Coordinated planning with the Kootenays
- Working partnership with off-road vehicle organizations

### **DESTINATION**

The weak link in creating market-ready trail experiences on the TCT-KVR is the trail itself, and without substantive improvements to the trail surface, signage and basic amenities, new investment of private capital in tour products and services will be slow in forthcoming. Multi-day, overnight trips on the TCT-KVR are the exception rather than the norm yet the raw materials are there for a marked expansion of these experiences. The major challenge of trail development is coordination amongst multiple stakeholders and funding for improvements.

### **Recommendations**

- Priority trail segments
- Multi-partner capital plan for medium-term trail and amenity improvements
- Continuous multi-use trail between Penticton and Osoyoos
- Market ready product and destination features inventory
- Regional trails plan for Boundary Country
- Trail management plan for Merritt sub-division
- Resource assistance for communities and stewards
- Friends of the KVR Program
- Adopt-A-Trail Program
- Regional rail trail funding protocol
- Grant writer
- Public fund-raising campaign
- Corporate trail builder partnership program
- User contributions to the trail

### **MARKETING**

#### **Branding, Signage and Technology Solution**

The Rail Trails BC (RTBC) brand needs to establish what is unique, distinctive and memorable about the BC rail trail experience, to define the aura and stories that make our rail trails worth travelling to

visit. The current experience is as diverse as the rail trail network with many different user groups, stewards, communities and businesses involved. RTBC can establish in the consumer's mind that there is a provincial rail trail network with a distinct identity that is unified at least across the Thompson Okanagan, if not the province. The three core values of the RTBC brand are heritage, nature and the human challenge. The brand symbol is reflected in the design concept.

For any trail, the brand must be fully integrated with signage, one of the keys to enhancing the visitor's experience. Clear and consistent way finding markers that present accurate information and interpretive displays will enhance the visitor's understanding of the system. Signage also guides consumers to [www.railtrailbc.ca](http://www.railtrailbc.ca) and the technology solution. The "flag" treatment for the Rail Trail brand is distinctive, highly visible and slightly reminiscent of the rail signal system used by railways today and in the past. For major entry points and kiosks, free-standing RTBC sign posts would be installed.

The third component of the brand foundation is the development of a comprehensive technology solution, a rail trail web app. This web app would be a complete rail trail guide to the region and ultimately to BC as a whole. With features such as GPS route finding and tracking, interactive maps, grade profiles, level of difficulty, among others, the app would be built with responsive design in order to produce good user experiences on all devices. It would become indispensable to trail users and create the perfect environment for establishing the RTBC brand.

### **Recommendations**

- Brand development
- Rail trail graphic standards manual
- Signage strategy
- Next steps for a technology solution
- Social media program
- Online Travel Agency (OTA) strategy
- Gamification
- Web app integration
- Content management protocol
- Exposure to US and European publications and websites
- Early stage funding strategy

### **Marketing Content and Support**

Cycling participation and trip motivation is higher among Europeans and Americans than Canadians, but over 80% of visitors to the Thompson Okanagan are from BC and Alberta so the greatest

opportunity to build trail visitation for the industry as a whole is among regional markets. The current market for cycling as a trip activity in the Okanagan is estimated at approximately 350,000 but with better tour opportunities, services and amenities that could triple to be more in line with overall participation rates of those who are visiting. Importantly, the likelihood of attracting new or incremental visitors (i.e. those who come to BC and the Thompson Okanagan specifically because of the trail, that is as a trip motivator) would be significantly improved with a better trail experience.

### **Recommendations**

- Regional markets from BC and Alberta
- Existing Canadian and international markets
- Opportunities related to cycling trends and TCT-KVR trail use
- Image and video bank targeted to the BC and Alberta EQ explorer types
- Trail history and interpretive stories as marketing content
- EQ research materials
- Printed trail map
- Blog and newsletter
- Media relations
- Media partnerships
- Corporate Partnership Program

### **EXPERIENCES**

A greater selection of services, like guided and semi-guided tours, that will appeal to domestic and international markets is needed to boost visitation on the rail trails. A market-ready trail requires market-ready and export-ready operators and service businesses. The branding and technology solution will attract more operators to invest in trail experiences but TOTA can further engage industry to exceed professional standards of operations, marketing and customer service. The wine industry has blazed a similar growth path over the last two decades and can be a beacon for rail trails in the years ahead. Greater integration of First Nations cultural interpretation and experiences could be a differentiating factor for the trail.

### **Recommendations**

- Canada 150 Celebration
- Fastest Known Time
- Product packaging and itineraries

- TOTA market research program
- Operator certification program
- Webinar series for trail products and experiences
- Emerging and niche uses

### **TRACKING PROGRESS**

A systematic collection of data and its use for decision-making and future planning is recommended. This would involve establishing good baseline data, especially on trail use, which is severely lacking at this time. Once this is done, TOTA can measure change over time, better understand cause-effect relationships, be able to make better decisions on where resources should go, inform decision-making on marketing and industry development, and of course communicate with stakeholders and partners.

### **Recommendations**

- Logic model
- Trail counts
- Trail surveys
- Operator surveys
- Visitor Centre tracking
- Annual Forum
- Market and trail development tracking





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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) is a regional destination management organization (RDMO) which acts as the official representative of Destination British Columbia (DBC) in the region. The region is an established visitor destination that annually attracts 3.8 million visitors and \$1.14 billion in spending. The industry however is dramatically seasonal in nature. Best known for “summer sun and fun” and to a lesser degree for “winter Champagne powder” the region experiences dramatic seasonal visitation and revenue peaks and valleys that challenge tourism operators and creates a less than optimal business environment.

Outdoor recreation, soft adventure, and specifically the development of “Rail Trails” experiences represent an opportunity for stakeholders, businesses and communities of all sizes to participate in and build upon a true regional initiative, one that has great potential for expanding tourism in non-peak periods.

Over the past many years the physical rail trail has been maintained through the collective efforts of individuals, stewards, community groups and all levels of government. The most urgent need has been to keep the trail functional and usable in a financially viable way while attempting to manage increasing, and often conflicting, use levels.

These actors have, for the most part, worked independently of each other to the point that many good intentions and efforts lack a regional cohesion and in some cases result in duplicative or counter-productive decision-making. There is little time and attention being focused on the rail trail system as a strategic provincial asset, one that has substantial potential for international recognition and use.

Currently the rail trail experience can be very rewarding in high-profile protected areas such as Myra Canyon or for those fortunate enough to enlist the services of the several tour operators serving the trail. However, the rail trail is falling well short of its capability and suitability as a world-class trail system. Market awareness is poor, regional branding and positioning non-existent, use too concentrated, user conflicts too frequent and, perhaps most importantly, few opportunities for communities and sub-regions to collaborate and break through development inertia. The bottom line is a product offering that attracts less than one percent of the potential market hiking and cycling in the Thompson Okanagan.

Rail trails, in conjunction with other initiatives and tourism products, have the capability to draw both domestic and international guests outside of the traditional peak periods. For this to happen it will be absolutely necessary to elevate the visitor experience across the region through the strategic alignment of market, product and destination development efforts, ideally with the participation of all affected communities and government.

## 1.2 THOMPSON OKANAGAN REGIONAL STRATEGY

The Thompson Okanagan ten-year [regional tourism strategy](#) (TOTA 2012) provides the strategic framework for the development of sub-regional and community tourism plans within the Thompson Okanagan. The work undertaken in developing the strategy was completed by TOTA on behalf of the regional tourism industry in 2012.

To be effective in building the region's tourism industry, the seven principles that underlie the strategy need to continue to shape priorities and activities moving forward. A commitment to working in strategic partnerships and gaining leverage from a more integrated approach, while respecting local autonomy and community values, will enhance the overall level of progress and mutual benefit. Formalizing a charter for sustainability and maintaining a visitor-centric perspective provides a framework of reference based on shared values for ongoing discussions on tourism planning, development and marketing.

Of the nine key issues identified in the Strategy, **Access** was highlighted because of its central role in moving visitors into and throughout the region. One of the five focus areas, the **Trails** component called for action on iconic trail development, best practices in trail management, integration with the provincial trails strategy and support for activity operators that collectively lead to new and unique experiences. "The role of trails is significant to the spectrum of opportunities available within the Thompson Okanagan and the region offers considerable potential for iconic trail development, including enhanced use of the Spirit of 2010 Trail/Kettle Valley Railway Trail through effective and enforced designation of usage." (TOTA 2012)

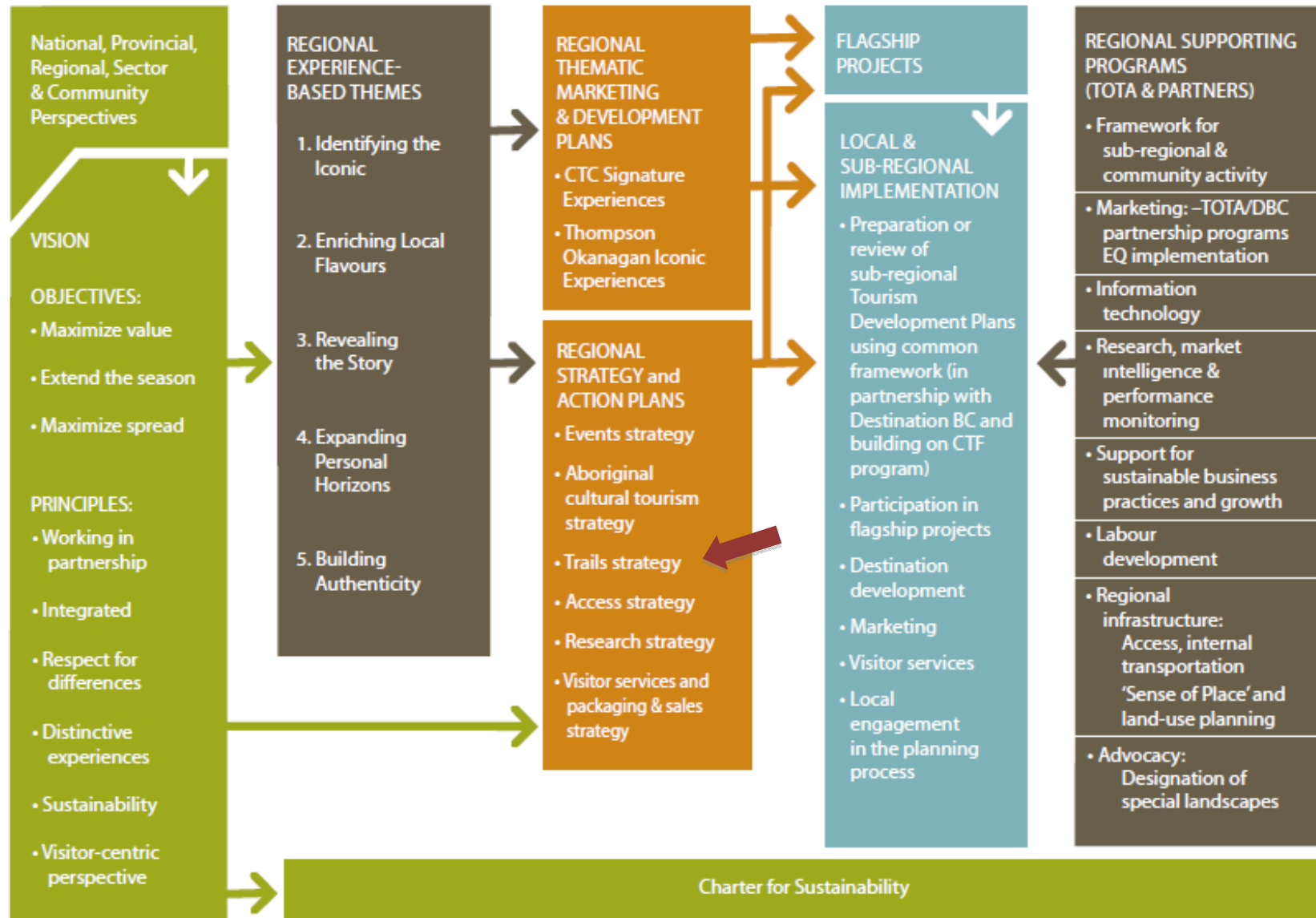
## 1.3 INTEGRATING WITH OTHER PLANS AND STRATEGIES

This Strategy, like Regional Strategy, reflects international best practices in rail trails development while seeking to integrate with higher level tourism strategies and initiatives in order to leverage resources and complement existing programs, policies and practices (Figure 1). The Strategy has endeavoured to be consistent with local area plans and add value to community tourism planning efforts.

Provincial plans were closely reviewed to identify opportunities for alignment and leverage.

The [Trails Strategy for British Columbia](#) presents a call to action inviting all British Columbians to join in supporting and developing a world-class system of trails. Almost all the key elements of the Trail Strategy are reflected in this document, from vision to create a world-renowned and sustainable trail network that benefits residents and communities to core initiatives in stewardship, governance, funding, marketing and implementation. These issues and principles are not only duly reflected in this document, they are strengthened through a clear cut commitment to develop the exceptional potential of the Thompson Okanagan's rail trails.

# TEN-YEAR TOURISM REGIONAL STRATEGY



The [British Columbia Mountain Bike Tourism](#) plan was also reviewed and shared principles of collaboration, enhanced funding, stewardship, capacity building at the local level and market-ready experiences are reflected in this Strategy. The plan acknowledged the development and recognition of BC rail trails as the main core of the Trans Canada Trail that could provide a new mountain bike experience, in particular cross country touring and wilderness rides.

Destination BC's [Corporate Strategy](#) (2015) sets out revenue performance measures in support of the BC Jobs Plan. Marketing objectives include enhancing BC's world reputation, strengthening its brand, increasing brand engagement and traveller advocacy, achieving market-leader status for travel trade relationships and annually increasing visitor volumes and expenditures. The Thompson Okanagan Regional Rail Trails strategy complements the DBC's strategy by following through on positive visitor experiences through regional and community collaboration and marketing best practices.

Local trail, land use and tourism plans were also reviewed to better understand how proposed trail developments in individual communities would have implications for the TCT-KVR and where there would be opportunities for integration and alignment of strategic planning, policies and standards. Planning in neighbouring regions were also reviewed for the broader perspective related to the rapidly expanding effort on an Okanagan Valley wide trail. Tourism development plans prepared for communities and regions as part of the Community Tourism Foundations program were reviewed to identify specific references to trail development, and more generally tourism development.

First Nations planning and participation in rail trails development is also anticipated. Aboriginal Tourism BC (AtBC) is implementing its strategic plan targeting aboriginal experiences and direct involvement in the tourism industry, both of which could be furthered through this Strategy.

#### **1.4 CONTRIBUTION TO PROVINCIAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

The Strategy would have implications and benefits beyond its primary purpose of building a market-ready world-class rail trail for a more competitive tourism sector. In BC, Tourism GDP is significantly higher than most other resource industries (DBC 2015a), and given the downturn in commodity markets over the last two years, it will have to play an even greater role in the future. Achieving the employment and wealth objectives set out in the BC Jobs Plan will require not just a strong provincial tourism economy but a growing one as well.

A long-standing priority of senior and local government is healthy, sustainable communities. Local government in particular (for example, Penticton, Princeton, Kelowna, Summerland and Grand Forks) has recognized the transportation and health benefits associated with trails by actively investing in these critical community assets.

Finally, rail trail development can provide new opportunities for rural communities that are struggling to keep their economies healthy and sustainable. The Rural Advisory Council and programs like the BC Rural Dividend were established to foster thriving rural communities. Rail trail-related tourism has the potential to catalyse growth for many communities that might otherwise lack viable development targets.

The Thompson Okanagan Regional Rail Trail Strategy provides the strategic framework for the development of sub-regional and community rail trails along the Trans Canada Trail within the Thompson Okanagan. The work undertaken in developing the strategy was completed by TOTA on behalf of the regional tourism industry and communities in 2015.

**Figure 1 Integrating With Other Strategies and Plans**



## 1.5 PURPOSE

TOTA, in association with Destination BC (DBC), Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC), Trans Canada Trail Society (TCTS), BC Cycling Coalition (BCCC) and Cyclo Touring BC Program (CTBC) has commissioned this Thompson Okanagan Regional Rail Trails Tourism Strategy (the Strategy).

The purpose of the Strategy is to assist in creating an internationally export-ready tourism product associated with the region's rail trail network. This will help contribute to the goals of the 10-Year Regional Tourism Strategy, titled *Embracing Our Potential*. The centrepiece of this study is the Kettle Valley Railway (KVR) and Columbia & Western Railway (CWR) rail trails that serve as the Trans Canada Trail through the Thompson Okanagan.

The Strategy is addressed the following outcomes:

- a framework the enables industry to understand the value of this sector to the region;
- describing guest expectations and anticipated guest experiences, how current products meet the demand, and where product gaps must be overcome;
- a framework for bringing the various government organizations, communities and special interest groups together to work collectively/cohesively to ensure this product achieves export ready status;
- elevating the themes in the 10-Year Regional Tourism strategy tying them into Rail Trail products and packaging;
- identifying funding models to sustain trail marketing, development and maintenance over time;
- ensuring the development of materials for the user groups that are accurate and consistent;
- developing branding and marketing tool concepts for incorporation across all of the Thompson Okanagan regional rail trails, including logo and signage, maps, brochures, online web apps, ensuring a consistent look and feel;
- demonstrating how a Rail Trail logo and signage can work in concert with existing rail trail and community signage;
- advancing the concept of the use of technology as a method for education, historical and geological information, video and safety along the rail trails;
- creating a product that appeals to a broader range of users through the use of online access of information, booking options and Rail Trail experiences that will promote the product in ways that will result in significant increases in the volume of hiking and cycling guests to the region both domestically and internationally; and



- developing an implementation plan that details a short-term (1-3 years) plan with goals and objectives, a mid range plan (4-6 years), and longer-term plan (7+ years) each of these to include goals and objectives as well as outlining major milestones.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY**

Three major phases were followed in preparing the Strategy. The research and analysis phase entailed the gathering of information about stakeholder groups, mapping resources, tourism products and services and the natural, historical and cultural features that are associated with the TCT and amenities. Where available, use data were also obtained. Other research was undertaken on trends and best practices in rail trail planning, development, management and maintenance, with a focus on tourism activities and their economic impacts. Lessons learned from different aspects of trail organizations, development, funding and marketing were identified and profiled.

A consultation program consisting of eight workshops, an online survey and key informant interviews was designed to maximize stakeholder input into the identification of issue, barriers, opportunities concerning regional rail trails and more specifically the potential for developing export-ready product. An initial set of six workshops were held across the region to assist with baseline, mapping and strategic planning. Follow-up interviews and the second set of workshops were used to further develop the research findings and provide feedback on strategic direction. The workshops were attended by 122 participants, while 88 responded to the online survey. A total of 225 individuals were consulted during the study.

Phase 3 consisted of preparing the draft and final Strategy reports and presenting the Plan to TOTA and its partners. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, strategy recommendations included branding, technology, signage, product development, marketing and funding.

## **1.7 A NOTE ON OFF-ROAD RECREATIONAL VEHICLE USE**

The focus of this strategy is cycling (and to a lesser extent, other forms of non-motorized recreational travel) as a rail trail experience. The rationale is that there is a considerable research base showing the tourism and economic benefits of cycle tourism, especially in relation to the inherently attractive grades on former rail lines. The TCT-KVR has attracted considerable market interest in high-profile areas like Myra Canyon and several tour operators are hosting thousands of visitors annually for events and guided or semi-guided tours. These experiences are increasingly integrated with other tourism services whether they be wineries, accommodators, restaurants or attractions. DBC research indicates that visitors to the Thompson Okanagan have a high level of interest in cycling. All in all, the business case for building a better cycling product in the region is compelling.

It is also recognized, however, that off-road vehicles (ORV) are active on many parts of the trail and that conflicts with non-motorized users regularly occur. This notwithstanding, it is also true that there is considerable common ground among all trail users in regard to trail conditions, signage, infrastructure and the like. Like their non-motorized counterparts, ORV clubs and users are making

substantial contributions to maintaining the trail and keeping it usable. These and other issues are addressed in different sections throughout this report and there are recommendations for greater communication and collaboration amongst user groups. Consultation discussions suggested opportunities for finding complimentary solutions to these issues are possible, especially given the clear difference in destination trail experiences each user group is seeking (ORV trail users are ultimately seeking access to wider trail systems, whereas cycle tourists desire travelling along the continuous linear corridor and favorable grade of the rail corridor itself - especially for long distance, multi-day trips between communities.)

What this report does not investigate is the tourism potential for ORVs in the Thompson Okanagan and how it might affect development on the TCT-KVR. It is believed the large majority of ORV use on the trail is by residents, with an unknown level of tourist use. Provincial ORV organizations and local ATV clubs are promoting the TCT-KVR as a motorized corridor. One way to increase collaboration at the community level is to take a much broader view of how the entire trail system might function in supporting all uses in ways that make the best use of scarce resources, infrastructure and volunteerism. It is believed further research and planning into exploiting ORV tourism opportunities would take the current lens off the TCT-KVR and generate a broader discussion on the potential for the ORV trail systems as a whole. A recommendation to this effect has been made in the strategy.



## 2 THE TRAIL EXPERIENCE TODAY

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### 2.1 SNAPSHOT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

A baseline of the TCT-KVR, including history, description of major segments, use levels, land use context, communities, services, visitor information, tourism activity in the Thompson Okanagan, cycling trends and market profiles, is presented in Appendix B. The following paragraphs provide a synopsis of the baseline.

The original KVR was completed in 1915, starting in Hope and terminating in Midway, but over time branch lines connected to Spences Bridge (via Merritt) and Osoyoos. The CWR from Midway east to Castlegar was also sometimes referred to as the KVR. Operations on these railways began winding down beginning in the 1960s. The majority of the KVR's and CWR's original routes have been converted to a multiple-use recreation trail, which comprise a portion of the BC section of the TCT.

A map of the KVR and its associated rail trail sections is shown in Figure 1. The Kettle Valley Railway section of the Trans Canada Trail extends roughly 482 km from Hope to Midway. When connecting sub-division rail trails are included, the trail length extends beyond 824 km.

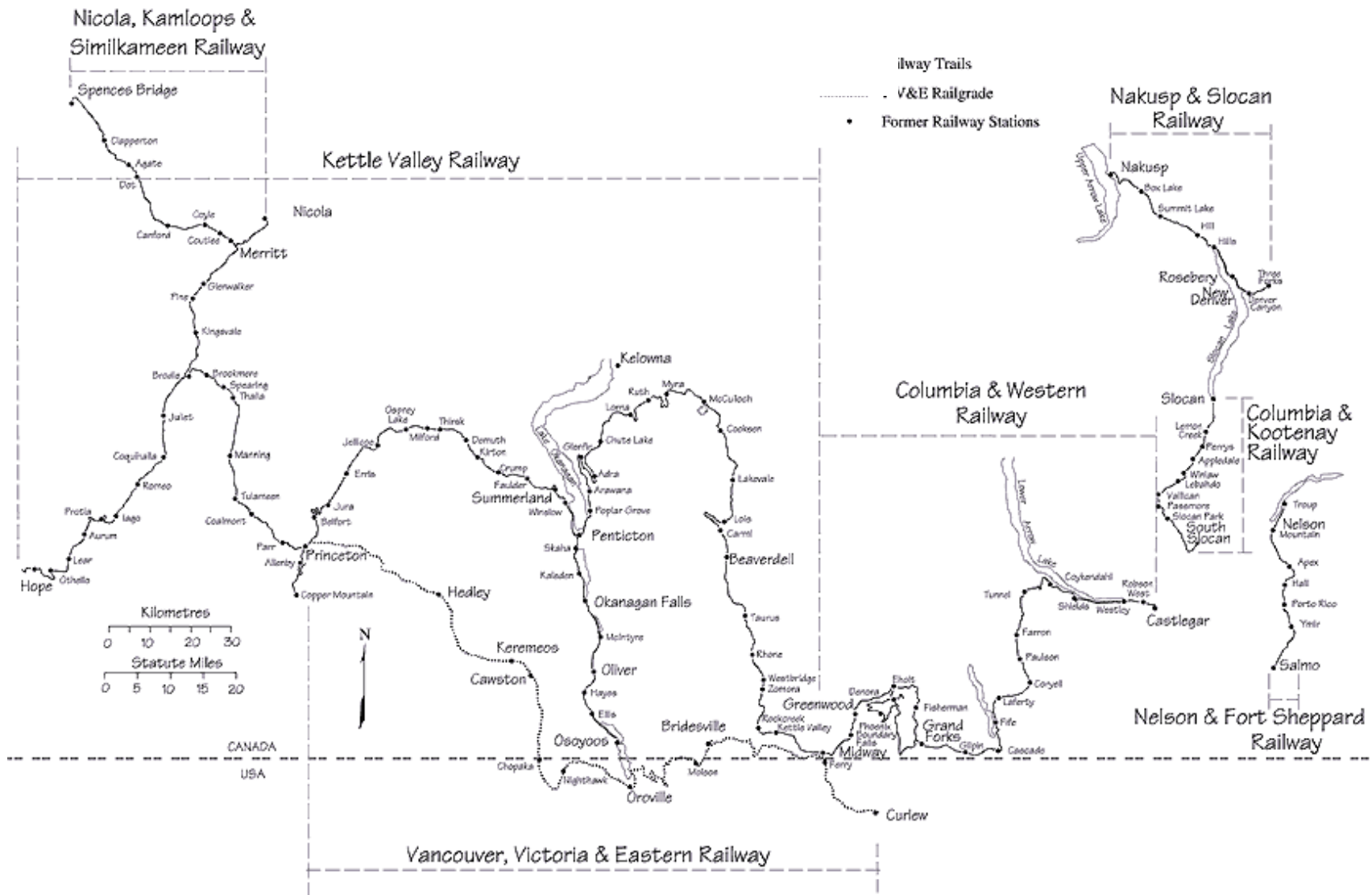
There is very little formal counting of trail use, except for the Myra Canyon section at Myra and at Ruth. Visitation since 2009 has fluctuated between 30,000 and 40,000, with 2008 attendance of 51,000 considered an anomaly because it marked the reopening of the trail after the 2003 fires.

The trail is primarily Crown land, under management by different provincial agencies. The majority of the right-of-way is managed by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) under Section 56 of the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA). FLNRO has negotiated partnership agreements with local governments and stewardship groups to help it meet its conservation and recreation objectives for the trail.

The TCT-KVR passes through First Nations traditional territories including, in the Merritt area, Lower Nicola, Schakan, Cook's Ferry, Nooaitch and Coldwater, in the Similkameen, Upper Similkameen and Lower Similkameen, and in the Okanagan, Osoyoos, Penticton and Westbank. It also lies adjacent to many reserves, particularly in the south Okanagan and between Merritt and Spences Bridge.

The major communities associated with the trail, from east to west, are Christina Lake, Greenwood, Grand Forks, Midway, Rock Creek, Kelowna, Naramata, Penticton, Oliver, Osoyoos, Summerland, Princeton and Merritt. Hope, which marks the western terminus of the KVR is outside the TOTA service area. In 2014, the regional population was approximately 277,000 with two-thirds of this clustered in the Kelowna area. The western and eastern flanks of the KVR are sparsely populated. Similarly, the availability of infrastructure and services that cater to visitors and trail users is highly concentrated in the Okanagan sub-region and diminishes in the Similkameen and Boundary sub-regions. However, forest and recreation sites and other trail networks proliferate in the remote areas.

Figure 2 Kettle Valley Railway and Connecting Rail Trails



Source: Langford (2015)

The large majority of trail use on the KVR is self-guided, but there are dozens of guide outfits and service providers catering to trail users.

Potential visitors to the Thompson Okanagan can obtain information on the TCT-KVR in digital and hardcopy format from a variety of sources, such as the provincial government, local government, visitor centres, trail organizations, stewardship and community groups, tour operators and individual businesses. Brand, website, mapping and visitor guide materials are highly varied between communities along the TCT-KVR route and there is little coordination of information. The RDOS and Trails BC provide the most comprehensive sources of trail information through their respective websites. Major traveller information websites like [www.britishcolumbia.com](http://www.britishcolumbia.com) and [HelloBC](http://HelloBC) do not feature the TCT-KVR as a single trail experience and do not provide map or trail-specific information.

In 2012, the majority of overnight travellers to the Thompson Okanagan were BC residents (70%), followed by Canadians from the rest of Canada (17%), US travellers (6%) and other international travellers at 7%. Together, BC and Alberta residents account for 83% of all visitors to the Thompson Okanagan and 72% of total spending. Approximately half of all visitors to the Thompson Okanagan stay with friends and family, but interestingly the rate is higher for US and particularly international visitors than their Canadian counterparts. In terms of activities undertaken in the region, BC residents and other Canadians tend to participate primarily in outdoor activities, while US residents and international visitors prefer a mix of cultural and outdoor activities.

Cycling is a top-ranked trip activity among Canadian visitors to the Thompson Okanagan, less so for US and international visitors. Nevertheless, cycling as a destination activity is growing in North American and European markets, spurred on by a global network of rail trails and many related services and events. In BC, cycle tourism is attracting a diversity of age groups who tend to be well educated and have above-average incomes. BC is seen as an appealing cycling destination by North American visitors to this province.

Explorer Quotient market profiles for BC and Alberta indicate a high level of interest in cycle tourism. Approximately two-thirds of BC residents, which represent approximately 70% of all visitors to the Thompson Okanagan, fall into four EQ types, Free Spirits, Authentic Experiencers, Rejuvenators and Cultural Explorers. The profile of Alberta households is a bit different. Two of the top four types in Alberta, Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits, also rank in the top four in BC, but No Hassle Travellers and Gentle Explorers, which make up close to 40% of all Alberta households, in BC only account for around 15% of households.

## **2.2 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

The experience of residents and visitors who use the TCT-KVR is a diverse one because of the changing landscapes, widely varying trail conditions and availability of visitor services and amenities. Some of the strengths and weaknesses that characterize the trail are addressed in the paragraphs below, based on feedback during the workshops, online survey and interviews, as well insights gleaned from the literature review.

The TCT-KVR has six major strengths:

- **Natural Assets** – The southern portions of the Thompson Okanagan that the TCT transects has an exceptional diversity of landscapes and elevations that if not unique are at least special in the international context. The ecological diversity of coastal rainforest, desert, parkland and alpine, is certainly nationally significant, if not internationally. The climate is dry in much of the region, especially in the summer, which takes much of the weather risk out of the trail experience. Wilderness areas are close by and accessible even in the major urban areas like Penticton.
- **Trail Features**– The TCT-KVR is a rail trail with grades generally in the range of 2% or less, which means it is accessible to a full range of users, including families, youth and seniors. The past and living history of the KVR, not just the engineering feats which were extraordinary in their day but the bridges, tunnels and trestles that exist today, are of great interest to visitors. With proximity to several major communities and highways, access to the trail is relatively good and safe.
- **Communities** - Community assets includes the history and cultural diversity, not just First Nations, which is of particular interest for overseas markets, but settlement and industrial (mining, forestry, agriculture) components as well. In the Okanagan, the connection between the trail to the winery and orchard industries is a strong one, while agri-tourism products are present along the trail in the Okanagan and Boundary.
- **Crown Ownership** – The trail, since it was purchased by the province from CP Rail, is crown land and therefore represents an uninterrupted right of way available for public use under one management regime.
- **Trail Stewards** - There are established stewardship groups in most communities and agreements have been reached with the Province for trail care and maintenance. This has promoted “ownership” of the trail and a good foundation for improvements and upgrading.
- **Business Development** – The TCT-KVR is being actively promoted as a destination experience to domestic and international markets. There are several experienced tour operators and many more accommodators and other businesses offering services to trail users. HelloBC, visitor centres, museums, the province and local government make maps and related trail information available to the public and visitors.

Weaknesses include the following:

- **Trail Amenities** – Basic amenities along the trail, including toilets, potable water, rustic camping and parking, are sorely lacking along many trail segments, notably in the Boundary and the Princeton-Merritt areas.
- **Trail Conditions** – Most user groups, motorized and non-motorized, acknowledge that the trail surface and conditions range from the poor to very poor with few sections hardened

sufficiently for cycling or even hiking. Sand and gravel surfaces, rutting, washouts, landslides, ponding/puddling are common. Use of the trail by major industries such as logging is also contributing to poor conditions.

- **Trail Connectivity** - The trail is not contiguous and can be very disjointed. Portions around Vaseux Lake, Penticton Indian Band reserve and between Spences Bridge and Merritt are particularly problematic. The trail is roadway or FSR in parts, while the former rail bed has been lost or removed in others. Some landowners are blocking access and conflicts between farmers and trail users are well documented.
- **Signage** – Signage on the TCT-KVR is lacking, and distance, way finding and interpretive information is not being presented in a consistent manner. This has a direct and immediate impact on the trail experience, especially if users are not prepared for the conditions they are likely to encounter.
- **Trail Maintenance** – Trail maintenance and the resources available for it is not sufficient to maintain or improve the trail as a point-to-point, multi-day cycling route, although there are certainly some sections that are well maintained and bear significant volumes of traffic. Although the Province has reached out to communities and stewards with trail partnerships, there is still a mix of mandates, capabilities and resources that make connectivity a challenge. Limited access to funding is a chronic issue for all areas. Some stewards have also indicated that over time the local commitment to developing the trail according to its original vision is eroding due the increase in motorized uses and its adverse effects on trail conditions, notably the surface.
- **Trail Management and Use Conflicts** – The management of the trail is inconsistent, with little to no monitoring, frequent occurrences of illegal use and many instances of anti-social behaviour (e.g. vandalism, physical confrontations between motorized and non-motorized users). In some communities (though not all), trail management is non-existent and relations between user groups can be adversarial. Safety issues related to potential collisions are a concern. It is recognized that this situation is not unique in the provincial context—land use conflicts occur in almost all areas of the province between all sorts of user groups, some representing residents and others tourists. Feedback during the consultation program indicated that lack of designated and regulated uses is a major problem for tourism development.
- **Perceptions of Allowed Use** – One of the major weaknesses identified at the workshops was that some visitors have a very clear perception of a rail trail as non-motorized corridor. Many maps are reinforcing this perception. Except for select sections in parks and municipal areas, there is a good chance that a user on the TCT-KVR will encounter motorized users. Not only is this fact not being communicated to many cyclists and hikers but there is very little cooperative work occurring on shared use management, for example, for infrastructure,

spatial and temporal separation strategies and trail behavior protocols (e.g. education, courtesy, safety, reporting).

- **Stewardship Burnout** – The number and volume of trail stewards are at risk of declining. The decision by RSTBC to transition existing stewardship agreements to RDOS has filled some of this gap, but increasing motorized use and the complexity of revised stewardship agreements has been frustrating stewards who may not continue in their role.
- **Cell Services** – Cell service is good on those segments of the trail near settled areas and on major roads/highways but it does not exist at all for some parts of the Boundary and in major portions of the Princeton and Merritt areas. Technology solutions are available for the pre-loading of trail information the implications for public safety, especially 911 services, is more problematic. There is very little documentation of emergency situations on the trail, but there are anecdotes of trail collisions for example that may be complicated by the lack of cell services.
- **Visitor Expectations** – Almost every workshop indicated that many trail users have a weak understanding of the experience they are likely to encounter on the trail and that the final delivery can fall short of expectations. Interestingly, that does not appear to be the case on all segments. Trip Advisor shows that Myra Canyon Park (non-motorized use only) is ranked 17 of 2,384 things to do in BC and 1 of 114 things to do in Kelowna. It has earned a certificate of excellence for consistently earning great reviews from travellers. There are very few mentions or reviews of other sections of the TCT-KVR on Trip Advisor.
- **Visitor Services** – Related to several of the above points, the information available to visitors who are interested in using the TCT-KVR varies widely by community and sub-region and, importantly, does not portray a unified trail experience. Even the name of the trail is inconsistent, sometimes being referred to as the TCT, other times the KVR and occasionally they are used together. There is little to no branding associated with the trail in the publications that were reviewed for the Baseline. There were a wide variety of maps available, some digital some only in hard copy, but with no consistent terminology, branding or presentation. Many visitors would have no idea of the length of the trail or opportunities along the way. The Kettle Valley Express Adventure Travel Guide to South Central BC appears to be the only end-to-end hard copy guide of the KVR within the Thompson Okanagan.

## 2.3 CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

- The TCT-KVR has exceptional capability given its length, grade, landscape diversity, mix of biogeoclimatic zones, heritage assets, and proximity to strategically located towns and cities and the services they provide to trail users.
- The suitability of the trail as a quality rail trail experience, and therefore its marketability, differs according to the expectations and perspective of the user or visitor.



- Where trail conditions are well managed, predictable and safe, such as Myra Canyon, use levels and visitation are high, as are the apparent levels of satisfaction by visitors. From an analytical standpoint, this revealed preference makes sense and suggests that the future potential for the trail will be greatest near major communities, in protected areas and where there are no allowances for motorized uses.
- Where trail conditions are more challenging, especially in the western sections (Similkameen, Coquihalla and Merritt) there is still a market for the trail and its potential should not be ignored. Epic adventures are possible on the remoter sections of the TCT-KVR and current conditions do not represent insurmountable barriers for those fully prepared and armed with the appropriate information, mapping and interpretive resources. This may represent a minority of users but the wilder side of the TCT-KVR can be an equally if not more compelling experience than the safer confines of the central Okanagan. Rather than viewing these areas as a problem to be solved, it should be marketed as an opportunity waiting.
- Tour operators and guides have the ability to educate, prepare, plan for and properly outfit their guests for trail use, and therefore are able to manage and in most cases mitigate risk. However, most trail visitors are self or semi-guided and do not benefit from this level of service. This places high level of importance on getting relevant, accurate and up-to-date information to all trail users, something that is not happening right now.
- The TCT-KVR is promoted through a mix of publications and websites, within and outside the region, with a great variety of trail terminology and classifications, mapping information, visitor information, marketing materials and brand applications. A search of HelloBC for Kettle Valley Trail, Kettle Valley Rail Trail and Trans Canada Trail leads to individual community landing pages. There is no unified online presence for the trail in the Thompson Okanagan.
- All of the above notwithstanding, the trail is in poorer shape today than it was 23 years ago when it was first designated as the TCT. It requires urgent attention so it does not degrade further. Even epic seekers prefer a contiguous trail with a navigable surface and access to basic necessities such as water, waste facilities, and rustic accommodation.
- The issue of motorized use on the TCT-KVR has two distinct dimensions:
  - Motorized use of the trail is very hard on the surface and raises the costs of care and maintenance. As far as maintaining a consistent visitor experience for cyclists on the trail, this is arguably the more important issue.
  - Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized trail users are well documented in the literature. Motorized users wish to have the trail open to all recreation uses (i.e. mixed use), because they use it as an access corridor linking to other trail systems and play areas. It should be recognized, however, that experiences for motorized and non-motorized users on a motorized trail are asymmetric. A motorized user will tolerate hikers and cyclists because they have little effect on his use. For the cyclist, hiker or even x-country skier a

motorized trail is akin to a roadway with its attendant inconveniences and risks. In fact, one of the major reasons for seeking out trails is to avoid road and highway conditions. As with many similar land use conflicts, effects are rarely absolute and will vary according to the nature, frequency and response to the interactions. Looking at the broader rail trail perspective in North America and Europe, however, there is very strong link between high non-motorized use levels and absence of motorized uses.

- If motorized users use the trail for access to other activity areas rather than as a destination feature itself, as many cyclists or hikers would, then this suggests that there may be interim management solutions that could avoid, minimize and mitigate conflicts.
- In summary, abandoned rail corridors are much more than local amenities, they are highly attractive non-motorized recreation corridors that have proved significant tourism generators in many parts of the world. Clearly, most jurisdictions consider the benefits to outweigh the costs and have pursued their trail systems with vision, vigour and belief. In the Thompson Okanagan, the opportunities for a world-class rail trails system are exceptional, but only if the asset is perceived and cared for as it should be—irreplaceable.



## 3 STRATEGY DIRECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 3.1 STRATEGY DIRECTION

On December 1, 2015, TOTA staff and members of the Experiences Advisory Committee gathered in Kelowna for a TCT-KVR strategic planning session. The purpose of the session was to review baseline information and results of the community consultation (i.e. workshops and interviews), discuss a future vision for the trail, set out key goals and identify marketing, destination and product development strategies that would support the study objective of building an export-ready rail trail experience. The following principle, vision and goal statements were distilled from the research and consultation process.

#### 3.1.1 The TCT-KVR and the Rail Trails Context

Part of the Terms of Reference for this study was to devise a brand and signage concept, and technology solution, that would contribute to the TCT-KVR as a market-ready product and visitor experience. Very soon into the research phase it became apparent that a strict focus on the TCT-KVR for these terms would be to ignore the much broader regional context of TOTA's and the province's expanding rail trail system. This would likely compromise the applicability of this study's outputs if implications for trails other than the TCT-KVR had not been considered. Discussions with key stakeholders from the Shuswap to the Kootenays uncovered an almost identical set of issues and challenges and more importantly, opportunities, for developing a rail trail network that would have few equals on the world stage. It was believed that the rapidly evolving valley-wide trail initiative in the Okanagan and the expanding rail trail network in the neighbouring Kootenays would eventually give rise to questions about why several competing trail initiatives were, if not working at cross purposes, at least not sharing intelligence and planning. For example, would it make sense to consider unified branding, common signage standards and shared technology that took the best advantage of a rail trail system (both within and outside TOTA boundaries) that is essentially contiguous and inter-linked? Logic would seem to say so. The decision was therefore made by the study team to fully consider the implications, costs and benefits of a broader regional approach to branding, signage and technology with an eye to creating the very best rail trail experience possible.

Branding, signage and technology are seen here as transformative because they have yet to be developed or refined for the TCT-KVR or for other rail trails in the Thompson Okanagan and beyond. They have the potential to represent a value-added proposition that communities, stakeholders and businesses can buy into and benefit from, essential for creating that consistent, expanded, market and export-ready experience that is a core objective of this Strategy. It is also this study's perspective that the challenge be described within a broader regional and provincial framework now rather than later when it becomes even more obvious that TCT-KVR development is only a part of a much larger rail trails opportunity.

### 3.1.2 Implementation Role

This document represents a strategic plan, which comprises a direction, a prescribed set of actions to achieve that direction, the allocation of resources to support the actions and the identification of roles and responsibilities for implementation. This last element, roles and responsibilities, is typically structured around the organization preparing the strategy. Thus, the strategy would align with the personnel, resources and other assets of the lead organization. However, the Regional Rail Trail Strategy is more than what TOTA itself can do, it is about supporting and in many ways influencing multiple courses of action among many different organizations who have a stake in rail trail development.

This context complicates the strategic planning process because these organizations are not bound to implementation of the Strategy, other than through the commitments they may have made in its preparation. The success of the Strategy is therefore contingent on the uncertain participation, support and indeed ownership of both the direction and underlying recommendations that are meant to achieve the export-ready rail trail experience in the Thompson Okanagan. This uncertainty will increase over time due to changes in staff, elected officials, and internal planning priorities. A legitimate concern of this Strategy is how to plan for and manage multiple partners and the related uncertainty while maintaining focus on the ultimate goal of a successful rail trail across the region.

It is also noted that as this Strategy is implemented, it could be scaled to include other regions with rail trail assets, including the Kootenays and Vancouver Island.

### 3.1.3 Principles of the Strategy

Strategy principles can be meaningful if they clearly articulate how TOTA and its partners needs to function in the future. The purpose of the Strategy is to change the trajectory of the trail as a visitor experience—most feedback to date indicates the status quo as a rapidly deteriorating asset whose experience for most users is worse today than it was 20 years ago. No action means a worse trail in the future than today. Informed choices about what needs to be done differently can put the trail on a different course that realizes its potential as prized destination experience. The following five principles help frame and bind the Strategy recommendations to follow.

- **Use our advantages.** By most accounts, the KVR (including its branch lines) has exceptional if not outstanding qualities as a rail trail that are very difficult to match worldwide. The total length is twice that of the longest rail trail in the US (Katy) and close to five times the famous Otago rail trail in New Zealand. The eco-system, landscape and elevation variety is something that British Columbians tend to take for granted but which many visitors, particularly from Europe, find extraordinary. To not use this relatively raw but irreplaceable resource for its highest and best use as a tourism and economic generator is a disservice to the province and the legacy of the railway itself.
- **Develop regionally.** The TCT-KVR represents a large geographic area with at least four distinct sub-regions, Boundary, Okanagan, Similkameen and Nicola. The Okanagan has the majority of the population, services and visitation and opportunities for developing market-

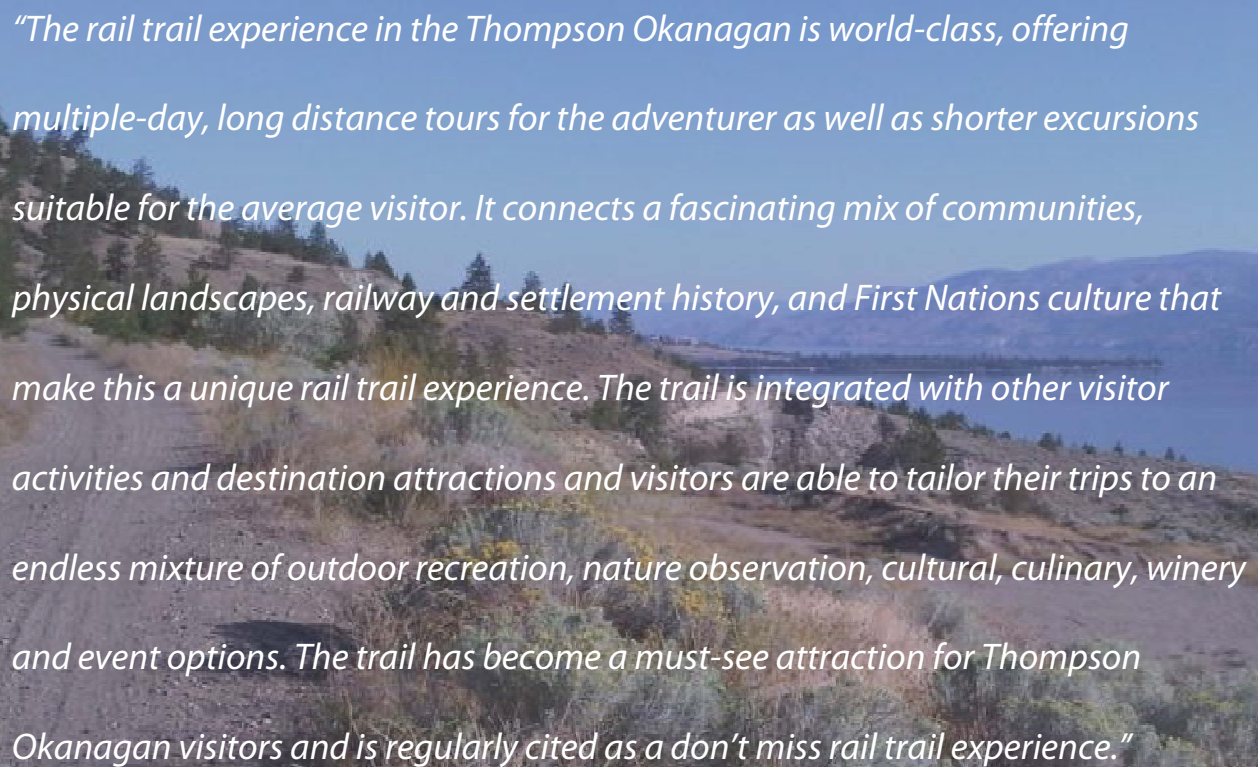
ready experiences on the trail. The other sub-regions have much greater challenges because of more remote conditions and less tourism activity. But, the original vision of the trail can only be achieved by encouraging and supporting development in all sub-regions where there is grassroots interest and involvement.

- **Think and act long term.** The physical length and nature of the TCT-KVR means the amount of planning, coordination, management and investment needed to actually create market-ready experiences in all sub-regions and all communities is considerable and will take years, if not decades, to realize. All initiatives, programs and actions should be guided by their contribution to the long term, cumulative vision of the trail.
- **Seek out productive partnerships.** As a regional DMO, TOTA has a limited mandate and few internal resources for implementing many aspects of this Strategy. It must therefore identify and pursue partnerships with senior government, local government, industry, community groups and other stakeholders as a way of enhancing implementation capacity.
- **Grow private investment.** Few would argue that a successful trail is one that is used and therefore valued by those who are using it. The more the trail is used by visitors, the more likely it is to attract private capital for the creation of new services and experiences that create beneficial impacts for communities.
- **Embrace the challenge.** The TCT-KVR is an exceptional asset but one that is highly variable in conditions, landscapes, communities and services. It is unlikely the trail will ever match the paved template of much of Europe and the Route Verte in Quebec, nor should it be. It is necessary to upgrade and improve the trail, but it is equally apparent that it can still become a marketable destination if it is positioned and promoted properly. The Okanagan's preferred EQ targets embrace challenges so there is no doubt that increased visitation is possible, providing government, communities and industry offer that challenge in meaningful, memorable way.



### 3.1.4 Vision for the Trail

A vision is no more than a statement of a future expected state of the organization, project or program. It provides long-term direction, shapes goal development provides a sense of purposeful action. It is a focal point and beacon for where TOTA and its partners are going with the rail trail initiative. The following vision elements emerged during the December 1, 2015 planning session in Kelowna.




*“The rail trail experience in the Thompson Okanagan is world-class, offering multiple-day, long distance tours for the adventurer as well as shorter excursions suitable for the average visitor. It connects a fascinating mix of communities, physical landscapes, railway and settlement history, and First Nations culture that make this a unique rail trail experience. The trail is integrated with other visitor activities and destination attractions and visitors are able to tailor their trips to an endless mixture of outdoor recreation, nature observation, cultural, culinary, winery and event options. The trail has become a must-see attraction for Thompson Okanagan visitors and is regularly cited as a don’t miss rail trail experience.”*

### 3.1.5 Goals for the Trail

The Strategy has six over-arching goals that provide direction for strategic initiatives, actions and the allocation of resources. Progress on these goals can be made over the next three to five years, with achievement of the vision statement measured over the next 20 years.

- 1) **Provincial government commitment to the original spirit and intent of the Trans Canada Trail.**  
The large majority of the TCT-KVR is crown land and thus the responsibility of the provincial government. Currently, RSTBC is the major player but other ministries have jurisdiction as well. As it currently stands, the trail is a remarkable and rare asset but one that is gradually diminishing because of insufficient maintenance, unsustainable uses in some areas and a lack of a cohesive approach to future development. Good progress is being made as RSTBC negotiates stewardship agreements along the trail, but higher levels of government must support the original vision of the TCT for transition from the status quo.
- 2) **First Nations support and participation.** The genuine, active involvement of First Nations in the development of the trail would be a game-changer and create mutual benefits. It has the potential to enhance linkages to First Nations tourism products and services, while increased interpretation of aboriginal culture and history would clearly differentiate the trail from competitors in Europe and the US and accentuate the authenticity of the KVR (and other rail trail) stories.
- 3) **Double the number of community partnerships.** Good progress is being made in places like Grand Forks, Christina Lake, Summerland and Penticton/Naramata where stewardship groups and local government have endeavoured to improve the trail for residents and visitors. More partnerships are needed so local resources can be effectively leverage, and be leveraged by, provincial resources.
- 4) **A reliable and accurate baseline of use and visitation.** Baseline data on the number of users and visitors is lacking and outside of the Myra-Bellevue area pretty well absent. It will be difficult to evaluate progress on the trail unless the appropriate metrics and data sources are in place.
- 5) **Double visitation in five years, with increased proportions of non-resident visitors, multi-day stays and distribution across the region.** Visitation is the impetus for tourism spending and the economic benefits that come with it. It is possible to generate incremental tourism impacts by increasing per capital or per party spending even without an increased in the number of visitors, but it would appear that in comparison to other rail trails, the major gains to be made in the Thompson Okanagan are in the absolute number of people on the trail.
- 6) **Develop 150 kms of multi-use trail with an emphasis on contiguous segments.** At this time, approximately 50 kms of rail trail have a relatively “reliable” visitor experience because of paved or hardened surfaces that exclude motorized activities. Without expansion of these core segments, attracting more users, especially families and older age groups that represent the bulk of the existing rail trail market, will be challenging. Daily distances on rail trail tours can



Best Practice  
Route Verte  
→ p 106

range from 30 to 45 kms, so it is clear that any aspirations of multi-day stays will have to include many more kms of predictable, reliable, safe and interesting segments than is now the case. Extending the rail trail season beyond the peak summer period is also dependent on improved trail and surface conditions.

### 3.2 FOCUS AREAS OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy recommendations are divided into five major focus areas, each of which directly supports the achievement of the Strategy vision and goals. These relationships will help provide a framework for management of the plan, evaluation and reporting.

**Figure 3 Focus areas and goals**





### 3.3 ORGANIZATION

#### **Key Issues**

The goal of creating a market-ready, world-class rail trail is contingent on a realistic organizational model that promotes a shared vision and spells out who is responsible for the different aspects of development. At the moment, there are relationships among many different government agencies, local government and stewards that manage to keep the trail useable and available to the public, but no entity vested with a vision for higher-level tourism development. In other jurisdictions the pathway for rail trails development vary widely according to the legal and land use context. In the US, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy assists communities in securing federal money for planning and constructing rail trails through the specific support of the National Trail Systems Act. In New Zealand and Australia rail reserves were used to convert former rail lines back to Crown land and trail use. In Europe, the situation is much different in that cycle development and touring takes advantage of centuries of public pathways. A common theme for all successful rail trails, however, is an organizational symmetry that brings together the many different actors responsible for physical, product and market aspects of trail development in a coordinate fashion. The trails described as Best Practices in this report, from the Vennbahn to the New Zealand Cycle Trail reflect this characteristic unity of vision and action.

#### **Recommended Actions**

1. **Trail advisory committee.** As a regional DMO, TOTA has no direct pathway or role for engaging in the physical aspects of trail and infrastructure development. Provincial and local governments that own and manage the trail itself, adjoining lands and related infrastructure bear this responsibility. TOTA does of course work closely with industry and government on creating trail-related visitor experiences so indirectly it has a stake in how lands and resources are managed and developed over time. A Trail Advisory Committee (TAC) should be established, along with a terms of reference, more generally to oversee the implementation of this plan, but also specifically to advocate for legislative, policy and program support from government that will support the trail vision. It is anticipated that the TAC would eventually be absorbed into the Trust once it is established (see item 4 below). Representation by RSTBC, DBC, Trails BC, regional districts, communities, stewards and operators is recommended.
2. **First-year work plan.** Once the TAC has been established it will be necessary to immediately produce a first-year work plan that focuses on ramping up for implementation of major initiatives outlined in this Strategy. Recommended content is as follows:
  - Quarterly meeting schedule for the TAC
  - An Annual Rail Trails Forum to be held in conjunction with the TOTA AGM and Tourism Summit (see strategy 58)
  - Temporary website for organizing and charting implementation
  - Development of a communications database and integration with TOTA's customer relationship management (CRM) system

- Inventories of exceptional experiences, export-ready products and operators
3. **Local government endorsement.** TOTA, through the advisory committee, should seek the endorsement of municipalities and regional districts who will be future partners for many aspects of this Strategy. Presentation to councils and boards highlighting and explaining the Strategy would precede a request for a resolution of support.
  4. **Rails Trails Trust.** A rail trails trust or foundation, similar to the TCT Foundation or the Bruce Trails Conservancy (BTC), should be explored as a new, lead organization for rail trails development in the Thompson Okanagan. The BCT non-profit, charitable model, in which numerous community groups and stewards already involved in trail development combined to create the trust, appears well suited for the TCT-KVR context. BCT has partnerships with nine separate trail clubs in communities along its route. By-laws state that although membership in an affiliated trail club is not required to be a member of the BTC, membership in the BTC is required to be a member of a BCT club. A Rail Trails trust for the Thompson Okanagan would pursue a broader mandate than the BCT, including promoting the TCT-KVR as a destination attraction. Membership would be open to any individual, family or organization in Canada but the focus would be on communities, stewards and businesses with a direct stake in the trail today. The main advantages of the trust or foundation model is its inclusiveness and openness, non-profit status, fund raising capability, continuity of membership and limited liability. It can also be scaled to eventually cover trails other than the KVR so there is overarching effort at regional rail trail development. TOTA can prepare a brief business plan for the trust that includes the mandate, vision and other bylaw components, while incorporating other elements of this Strategy as needed. The TAC would be replaced or realigned with the trust once established. Alternatively, in the interests of expediency and cost, the Trust could be established as a subsidiary of TOTA, which itself is a non-profit. One element of the trust or foundation that needs to be determined is the legal relationship with the Province. There should be some formalized agreement that vests the new organization with some authority either at the stewardship or marketing level.
  5. **Policy brief on future TCT-KVR rail trail development.** A clear policy outlining expectations for the physical trail should be prepared and distributed to all levels of government. The objective would be to increase and effectively deploy resources that would be in keeping with the market potential of the trail. Rail trail research shows that there is a direct and positive correlation between rail trail investment and benefits to local businesses, residents and communities. At this time the KVR is a world-class asset but it will not become a world-class attraction without proper capital investment. The policy brief would articulate and underline a future vision, while emphasizing the roles of all levels of government. It would be used to guide advocacy and carry out communications activities.
  6. **Policy brief on future rail trails development.** Another important aspect of the policy would be expectations and coordination with the rapidly evolving Okanagan Valley-wide trail initiative and the evolving rail trail in the Shuswap/North Okanagan. This involves rail trails

between Vernon and Kelowna and proposed new trails linking West Kelowna to Summerland. The southern reaches of this network would of course include major portions of the TCT-KVR and thus directly interact with this strategy. Acquisition, decommissioning and development of portions of the Kelowna Pacific Railway (CN) corridor (see Figure 17) and ongoing discussions for the acquisition of the CP corridor between Sicamous and Armstrong present exceptional opportunities to create a vast rail trail system that would potentially exceed 1,000 km. Due to the relative absence of motorized use conflicts, and the active participation of major cities like Vernon and Kelowna, a north-south rail trail could be a reality within the foreseeable future. The synergies among these trails is apparent, but there are also likely to be growing pains, such as increasing inter-community competition for already scarce trail resources. The policy would provide guidance for TOTA and its partners that supports the optimization of trail improvements with the greatest potential for rail trail experiences. It would also help local government partners coordinate and scale their own planning and management. It is also recommended this policy be developed in cooperation with the provincial government as a preliminary step toward a comparable provincial policy.

7. **First Nations Partnership.** Now common in BC, with the Songhees and Esquimalt nations involvement in the E&N rail trail on Vancouver Island and the Splatshin Nation, which is in the process of negotiating the purchase of the abandoned CP Rail line between Sicamous and Armstrong as an active rail trail corridor. The Sinixt Nation works closely with the Slocan Valley Rail Trail Society on the Columbia and Kootenay rail trail. The North Shore Spirit Trail was a partnership between Squamish Nation and the District of North Vancouver. There will be opportunities to partner with First Nations on aspects of trail development and interpretation, for the TCT-KVR as well as other rail trails in the Thompson Okanagan as they develop. Direct First Nations involvement in the Trail Advisory Committee and Trust is highly recommended. TOTA is also collaborating with AtBC through a First Nations liaison and there are plans to develop an aboriginal tourism strategy for the Thompson Okanagan. This presents an ideal opportunity to garner greater First Nations involvement in rail trails products and experiences.
8. **Memorandum of understanding (MOU) with First Nations regarding participation in and support for the trail.** The Penticton and Osoyoos Nations are noted here for particular attention because of the proximity of their citizens, lands and assets to the TCT-KVR in the south Okanagan. An MOU with the Okanagan Nation Alliance is also recommended to represent other traditional territories in the south, while a third MOU is recommended to represent First Nations in the north. These agreements would touch on issues related to trail development, land use, business development and heritage and cultural interpretation. First Nations could be beneficiaries, particularly in terms of business development opportunities for catering to trail visitors, either new enterprises or packaging existing services that tap into the emerging trail market.
9. **Coordinated planning with the Kootenays.** As noted in the baseline, there are high-potential rail trail assets in the Kootenay region beyond the eastern portion of the TCT-KVR

(including the CWR) that terminates in Castlegar. Coordinated planning with Kootenay trail stakeholders should explore the appetite for scaling this Strategy to that region.

10. **Working partnership with off-road vehicle organizations.** TOTA should support the Province's stated commitment to establish the TCT-KVR as a multi-use, non-motorized (except snowmobiling) trail. This is the best way to minimize trail use conflicts and ensure a rail trail experience that is within the expectations of the market place. Few rail trails mix motorized and non-motorized modes and certainly the successful, high-use trails in the US, Europe and Australia/New Zealand exclude motorized uses. The Province has been unable to adequately support or enforce this model, even though it remains the objective of the TCT. However, the Strategy must also recognize the realities of existing use, anticipate ongoing motorized uses on many sections of the trail, and seek an interim management model that is acceptable if not actively supported by motorized off-road users. The workshops indicated that off-road motorized users are dealing many of the same issues as non-motorized users (e.g. poor trail surfaces, missing trail sections, barred access, lack of infrastructure) and are equally squeezed on accessing funds to keep the trail navigable. The workshops also indicated that there were opportunities for physically separating use on the trail (i.e. parallel trail sections), sharing crossings and sharing facilities such as water, waste disposal and campgrounds. Such a model of course requires collaboration among groups at the local and higher levels. This has happened in the Shuswap and in the ongoing development of the Kettle Valley Heritage trail. TOTA can work with local ATV and ORV clubs, as well as the Quad Riders ATV Association of BC (ATVBC) and the BC Off Road Motorcycle Association (BCORMA), to identify the following:

- TCT-KVR sections that are core experiences or critical access for motorized users;
- Development strategies on these sections that adequately separate motorized and non-motorized users within the same right-of-way or corridor (where possible); and

Management strategies that promote and encourage trail etiquette that brings all users to a common understanding of how mixed-use trails are supposed to function. Also, as in noted in the Section 1.6 further research into ORV tourism in the Thompson Okanagan should be considered by TOTA.

## 3.4 DESTINATION

### 3.4.1 Trail Development

#### Key Issues

Discussions with government, communities, stewardship groups and the tourism operators has clearly identified trail conditions as the major limiting factor in creating a market-ready TCT-KVR rail trail. The roughly 700 kilometres of access, which includes branch lines, is a world scale rail trail with exceptional natural features and good potential as a destination attraction for cyclists and hikers. This potential is underlined by the low grade and preserved right-of-way, which is why so many jurisdictions have targeted rail trails for non-motorized trail development and use.

But natural assets and features are not the sole or even leading determinants of a competitive rail trail; if they were then the TCT-KVR would be hosting many more users than is presently the case. It is true that some operators have developed successful tour businesses on the trail, but the majority are day trips rather than multi-day, overnight tours, and they account for only a fraction of total visitors. What determines the trail experience is the combined effect of the trail, its surroundings, the human interactions and access to services. It is apparent, based on feedback from operators and reviews of OTR sites such as Trip Advisor, that the TCT-KVR could be providing a much more consistent and reliable experience that is in keeping with the expectations of visitors. Greater interpretation of cultural, historical and First Nations stories is greatly needed. Importantly, it was clearly noted in the workshops and the survey that lack of basic amenities was adversely affecting the experience of those visitors who were not adequately informed and in some cases not adequately prepared for the conditions they encountered. This is partly an issue of equipping visitors with the right information before and during their trip, but it is also a matter of being able to meet the minimum requirements (let alone best practices) for what most consumers understand as being a rail trail experience. It is no surprise that that part of the TCT-KVR with the highest use levels, Myra Canyon, happens to occur in a provincial park where these elements can be better controlled than on other trail segments.

The weak link in creating market-ready trail experiences on the TCT-KVR is infrastructure and without substantive improvements to the trail surface, signage and basic amenities, new investment of private capital in tour products and services will be slow in developing. For comparison, multi-day rail trail packages marketed on the Otago Rail Trail in New Zealand have trail lengths of between 150 and 250 kilometres. An average daily tour segment would be 30 to 40 kilometres, which would vary in accordance with other activities scheduled for that particular day.

### **Recommended Actions**

- 11. Priority trail segments that balance short-term market potential with the long-term vision of a complete trail.** TOTA can work with community stewards, RSTBC and RDOS to identify trail segments that could reasonably be developed over the next five years. Based on feedback obtained during consultations with stakeholders, the development potential of trail segments by chronological order are presented in Table 1. This ordering considered current use levels, potential use levels, potential for contribution to extended tours, costs of upgrading and improving the trail to minimum rail trail standards, local community support and extent of user conflicts. These factors would need to be qualified through discussion with communities and stewards on a regular basis. If productive partnerships emerge, priorities in Table 1 may change as well. For example, re-establishing the Penticton to Summerland portion of the trail through Penticton Indian Band lands would be a priority if a partnership with PIB could be established. It is noted that the entire TCT-KVR and branch lines into the south Okanagan and Merritt form part of the overall trail vision—Table 1 is a recommendation on sequencing which, if followed, would first, encourage more multi-day tours, and second, make it easier for local stewards to improve conditions on currently remote and incomplete

sections of the trail. This would be in keeping with RSTBC's 2014 revised strategic approach, which emphasizes community partnerships as a rationale for trail maintenance and upkeep.

**Table 1 Sequencing of Trail Marketing and Development**

	Segment	Length	Mixed-use?	Rationale
Short-term	Christina Lake to Grand Forks	17	No	Excellent views, grasslands, local user agreement, good highway access, local investment in trail.
	Myra-Bellevue Park to Chute Lake	25	Park-No Crown land-Yes	Proximity to Kelowna, protected area, good trail surface and access to services, relatively high level of market awareness.
	Little Tunnel to Penticton	16	No	Excellent views of Okanagan Lake, proximity to hospitality and wineries, strategic intersection of multiple trail systems, local and regional investment in trail, active transportation corridor.
	Summerland to Thirsk Lake	40	Yes	Totally redone trail between Summerland and Faulder, proximity to train tours, extensive in-community signage and services. Trail deteriorates west of Faulder.
	Otter Lake to Jura	44	Princeton-No Crown land-Yes	Red cliffs/canyon, quality infrastructure in Princeton (paved trail, new bridge, maintained), good surface between Princeton and Jura.
Mid-Term	Midway to Westbridge	38	Yes	Mostly hard-packed rail bed, grass and ranchlands, few services but Midway and Rock Creek could expand as staging areas. Some paved road used as detour. Land owners discourage motorized uses.
	Chute Lake to Little Tunnel	25	Yes	Access to several rock ovens and excellent potential for linking Myra to Naramata/Penticton but major issues with trail surface including sand and washboard. The grade is a consistent 2% and eastbound trail users will find this section challenging, even more so with variable surface. Shuttling services would improve use.
	Penticton to Summerland	15	Yes	The TCT is Highway 97 and paved streets, as it avoids original right-of-way through Penticton Indian Band land. Opportunity for partnerships with PIB for re-establishing the original trail.
	Penticton to Osoyoos	58	Yes	Low grades, exceptional potential through wine country, Vaseux Lake, clustered services, close proximity to proposed National Park Reserve, no historical usage by motorized users. RDOS working on filling gaps on the trail; partnership opportunities with Osoyoos and Penticton Indian Bands.
Long-Term	Grand Forks to Eholt	22	Yes	Rocky for much of the first 16 kms, few services in western sections.
	Eholt to Midway	29	Yes	Hard-packed rail bed but few services.
	Westbridge to Myra-Bellevue	70	Yes	Surface rough, washboarded in places, motorized uses.
	Thirsk Lake to Jura	48	Yes	Trail surface variable, often crisscrosses with Princeton-Summerland Road, few services.
	Otter Lake to Brookmere	31	Yes	Rugged and rough trail surface, frequent washouts, limited services, no Internet, high levels of motorized use.
	Brookmere to Merritt	47	Yes	Incomplete route, mixed road/trail, not recognized as trail by RSTBC, highly varied, limited use, few services except near Merritt.
	Merritt to Spences Bridge	65	Yes	Exceptional views and landscapes along the Nicola River, but many sections incomplete, missing crossings, First Nations concerns.
	Brookmere to Hope	91	Yes	High levels of motorized use, surface rough/variable, outside TOTA boundaries.

- **Development of a multi-partner capital plan for medium-term trail and amenity improvements.** Identifying trail segments in need of improvement and preparing a supporting policies will not be enough to increase the resources available for trail improvements, particularly within smaller communities and in rural areas. TOTA and TAC should prepare, in cooperation with communities, RSTBC and Trails BC, a unit cost level estimate of total and incremental operating and capital requirements for priority sections. RSTBC is negotiating a five-year capital plan for the Columbia and Kootenay rail trail and a similar plan is needed for the TCT-KVR, although it would be considerably more complex. A ten-year planning horizon would frame the plan but costing and specific developments could be focused on the next five years. The identification of funding and other contributions by government, communities and industry would highlight the benefits of leveraging and facilitate fund raising.
- **Continuous multi-use trail between Penticton and Osoyoos.** Many sections of the original Osoyoos subdivision railed and right-of-way has been lost because of settlement and other development activity in the south Okanagan. The spur line that runs down the west side of Skaha Lake to OK Falls could be extended to link to the multi-use path in Oliver and then link the wine region between Oliver and Osoyoos, an area rich with visitor services and tour opportunities. TOTA could support the RDOS and the trail development initiatives outlined in the Regional Trails Master Plan and local area OCPs. The Master Plan recommends, among other things, completing the trail connection on the west side of Vaseux Lake, and coordination with the Oliver Trails Master Plan. The Federal Government announced in August, 2015 that it would be providing grant funds to complete the KVR trail between Oliver and Osoyoos so there are converging investments that give this segment high potential.
- **Market ready product and destination features inventory.** A product and events inventory that can serve as a research base should be assembled for the trail. A central repository of existing sources (e.g. tourism operators, facilities, attractions) should be maintained on the website.
- **Regional trails plan for Boundary Country.** Outside of the Okanagan and the Boundary, the Kootenays have the best agglomeration of abandoned rail trails, including the KVR and Columbia & Western railways that link Myra-Bellevue with Castlegar, and beyond. A trails plan similar to that of the RDOS would provide direction for local trail development efforts and show linkages to the exceptional historical resources and interpretation possibilities.
- **Trail plan that links the Merritt sub-division of the KVR to the TCT at Brodie.** The Nicola Valley Explorers Society has been putting what resources it can access to maintaining a semblance of a trail west of Brookmere and down to Merritt, but there are numerous stream crossings, trail surface issues, shared road/trail section, and conflicts

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with motorized users that prevent this segment from being a marketable experience to all but the hardiest cyclists at this time.

The fact that this segment is not part of the TCT and not recognized as an official “trail “ by RSTBC means it falls outside provincial funding envelopes available to most of the rest of the TCT-KVR. The history and current visitor experience of the Merritt/Nicola area is also distinct from the Okanagan, Similkameen and Boundary sub-regions. There are some compelling reasons for not ignoring the Merritt sub-division as a development target for the rail trail. First, it is the most accessible from the Lower Mainland and amenable to short excursion or day use by this major market. Second, routes 5 and 5a are among the busiest in the province, with most interior-bound highway travellers passing through the Coquihalla and Merritt areas. Third, Merritt is part of the Gold Country Community Society, which would be a ready vehicle for trail marketing. Fourth, there is a long history of local stewardship maintaining interest in the trail.

The plan would not be developed with RSTBC, since it has no jurisdiction, but with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and the BC Transportation Finance Authority (BCTFA). TOTA can work with the Nicola Valley Explorers to update priorities first identified in the 2000 report for the City of Merritt on the Brookmere to Merritt section of the trail (Aestech Consulting Inc. 2000) as the basis for discussions.

12. **Resource assistance for self-identified communities and stewardship groups who wish to undertake trail development in support of the Strategy.** The following resources can be made available to communities through the website:

- A handbook that local stewardships groups can use to recruit and organize volunteers, identify and prioritize trail projects, engage in and resolve issues around motorized and non-motorized use, form partnerships and seek out trail funding. The state of Pennsylvania has a Trail Town Program for small rural communities that wish to develop trail tourism and outdoor recreation. The purpose of the Program is to ensure that trail communities and businesses maximize the economic potential of the trail. The Program also works to address trail-wide issues and opportunities through regional cooperation and to build the connection between trail and town (Trail Town Program 2015).
- Best practices from inter-regional trail alliance models so there is an opportunity to contribute to and participate in a broader, functional rail trail network. The Shuswap Trails Alliance, Central Okanagan Trails Alliance and emerging initiatives in the North Okanagan/Shuswap for a valley-wide trail could share their insights and lessons learned with communities along the TCT-KVR. Shared planning and resources could significantly enhance efforts to develop these trails into a broader rail trail experience.
- Best practices and resources from North America trail organizations, such as [American Trails](#) and the [Rail Trails Conservancy](#).



- An economic and community benefits handbook that quantify the economic benefits of cycling, hiking and equestrian uses by visitors, as well as residents. This would help stewardship groups build community support for trail development.
- Funding sources for trail development—these are constantly changing and can range from trail/recreation specific to broader programs with multiple mandates or targets.
  - The Canadian 150 Fund, administered by Canadian Heritage is to create opportunities for Canadians to participate in local, regional, and national celebrations for the country's 150 anniversary. Applicants must provide 25% of the total approved capital cost but this can include in-kind contributions (e.g. volunteer labour). A review of the funding guidelines and examples suggests that different aspects of this strategy, particularly events, would be eligible for funding. (Canadian Heritage 2015)
  - The New Building Canada Fund – Small Communities Fund could also support cycling infrastructure projects, although to date most project have involved basic municipal infrastructure such as water and sewer facilities. The Fund is supported by provincial and federal governments for communities with a population of less than 100,000 people. It runs from 2014 to 2024.
  - Bike BC. The Province funds infrastructure which forms part of a bicycle network plan prepared and adopted by a municipality or regional district through BikeBC. Bike BC funded the E&N Rail Trail in the amount of \$1.7 for improvements between Esquimalt and Langford. The North Shore Spirit Trail received \$3.8 million for a waterfront multi-use path connecting Horseshoe Bay and Deep Cover. This project was a partnership between the Squamish Nation and the City and District of North Vancouver. (Bike BC 2015).
  - National Trails Coalition (<http://www.ntc-canada.ca/>). In 2014, the Coalition received \$10 million dollar from the Federal Government that was used to support trail projects across Canada on a matching dollar basis. Grand Forks, Kelowna and Princeton were grant recipients for the 2014-15 intake, but the program wraps up at the end of 2015. Other funding may be available in the future.
  - Trans Canada Trail (<http://tctrail.ca/>). Their current funding focus is the completion of missing sections of the TCT, none of which are in BC, up to 2017. However, they may be a potential source after that year.
  - Corporations with community engagement programs that target recreation, transportation and sustainability issues. There are many such companies in the province, for example, Mountain Equipment Coop's [community contribution program](#), Woods Canada [dream job contest](#), and Phillips Brewing's BC Benefit Brew contest<sup>1</sup> (Phillips 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> Trails BC was one of ten BC charities eligible for funding from the brewer in 2015.

### 3.4.2 Trail Funding

#### **Key Issues**

Funding for the maintenance and upgrading of the TCT-KVR is a recurring challenge for the province, communities and the stewardship groups. The annual RSTBC budget is approximately \$120,000 for maintenance and \$300,000 for capital. There are also cash expenditures being made locally plus a significant amount of undocumented “sweat equity” going into maintaining the trail for example in the form of casual labour for things like clearing minor debris and patching the surface with on-site materials. Stewardship groups will also fund-raise and utilize the contributed labour of members for signage and way finding so trail users can have a safe and enjoyable experience. The costs of maintaining the trail are therefore much higher than the RSTBC budget allocation.

The average cost for improving a kilometre of trail surface can range from between \$20,000 to \$30,000 per kilometre for recycled asphalt/aggregate to more than \$60,000-100,000 for straight asphalt. Assuming the minimum requirements of a recycled asphalt surface, resurfacing the entire trail, excluding those segments already improved to this standard, would amount to between \$12 million and \$24 million. This would not include additional improvements related to culverts, bridges, signage and other infrastructure needed to create a consistent conditions on the trail. In urban areas, the costs can rise significantly as municipal infrastructure like lighting is included. For example, the Vancouver Island Rail Trail through Nanaimo identified costs that ranged from \$2 million to \$4.5 million per kilometre. Costs for paving the KVR through Princeton were approximately \$52,000 per kilometre.

#### **Recommended Actions**

13. **Friends of the KVR Program.** Friends groups are formally (or informally) established groups whose purpose is to protect, improve or promote an asset, in this case the trail. One of the biggest impediments to improving the TCT-KVR is the absence of a grassroots entity strategically planning for the trail within the Thompson Okanagan. A Friends program could fill a vital intra-regional role linking national, provincial and local actors into a cohesive strategic approach to trail development. Organizations like the TCT Foundation, Trails BC and RSTBC (each of who have much larger mandates than the TCT-KVR) and smaller community and stewardship groups such as the Myra Canyon Restoration Society or the Grand Forks Trail Society would have a forum to discuss, engage and promote the trail as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for conservation, recreation and inter-community transportation. A Friends groups can be self-directed, bring a ideas and energy for improving the trail and of course help with trail building and maintenance. It could also be targeted at specific projects and be integrated with the Adopt-A-Trail program (next strategy).

TOTA can compile a master list of potentially interested organizations and individuals, host an organizing meeting and proceed to identify the key elements of the organization, including legal status, vision and mission statements, objectives, targeted initiatives, member page and resource section on the new website and communications strategy.

14. **Adopt-A-Trail Program.** An Adopt-A-Trail program is one way to raise money for specific trail segments. Individuals, families, trail user groups, outdoor groups, faith-based groups, service organizations and businesses could be solicited to participate. Adopters have the opportunity to engage in trail maintenance and planning, become involved in conservation, bring a sense of ownership the entire trail network and contribute to protecting trails for future generations. Adopt-A-Trail volunteers assist Park staff in managing and maintaining trail systems. Suggested program components are as follows:

- Minimum two kilometre length
- No overlaps
- Term of two years, renewable upon mutual review
- Guide of basic maintenance activities provided (e.g. brushing, debris clearing, litter collection, trailhead/parking lot cleaning, reporting vandalism), training provisions, dress and material requirements (e.g. basic tools such as rakes or shovels, garbage bags), reporting and logging procedures, and safety procedures

The Program would have to be coordinated with RSTBC and its licensees (i.e. stewardship groups, local government) on those portions of the trail where agreements have been negotiated. TOTA could oversee promotion of and recruitment for the program, provide a program guide, including application, certification and reporting forms, help assign segments and provide a classroom orientation for adopters, while RSTBC and its licensees would be responsible for addressing permitting and liability issues, signage and coordination of the on-the-ground work.

15. **Regional rail trail funding protocol.** There are numerous trail development efforts ongoing in the Thompson Okanagan, including another major rail trail initiative, the Okanagan Rail Trail. A valley-wide trail initiative with proposed trails on the west side of Okanagan Lake between West Kelowna and Penticton is also in discussion. This has led to a set of potentially confusing development scenarios and future competing fundraising efforts as communities and trail stakeholders vie for scarce resources. In terms of the KVR specifically, trail proposals in the Okanagan have the potential to draw capital away from the Boundary, Similkameen and Nicola areas. TOTA should take the opportunity to facilitate or lead a coordinated fund raising effort or secondarily, seek a memorandum of understanding among key stakeholders that recognizes the strong mutual benefits that can be gained by developing an extensive trail network through the region, and lays out a framework for cooperating on fund raising.

16. **Grant writer.** Organizations such as Northern Development Initiatives Trust and Columbia Basin Trust (neither of whom service communities in the Thompson Okanagan) will fund grant writers for communities because the benefits in terms of leveraged funds generally outweigh the costs in terms of preparing the grant applications.

- BC's \$75 million Rural Dividend is targeted at rural communities with populations less than 25,000. Funding of \$25 million annually is available in for community capacity building,

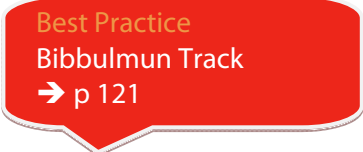
workforce development, community and economic development and business sector development. Local governments, not-for-profit organizations and First Nations are all eligible to apply (Government of BC 2016).

- The Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust (SIDIT) makes grant applications for a variety of community projects and while direct trail development and signage are ineligible projects, a host of other initiatives related to this strategy, including tourism, agri-tourism, cultural and technology initiatives are (SIDIT 2015).
- The Federal Gas Tax Fund Each year provides funding for local infrastructure projects. In 2011, it became a permanent source of infrastructure funding for municipalities. Gas Tax funds were used extensively for the development of the E&N rail trail and has been used in Boundary Country in support of trail initiatives.

17. **Public fund-raising campaign.** There are different options available for raising funds to support the trail, but with corporate and user-pay opportunities discussed in the following two strategies, this initiative is focused on a conventional fund-raising. This would call for the establishment of a charity similar to the Nanaimo Regional Rail Trail partnership setup in 2014 to support the E&N rail trail and the campaign recently announced to support the Okanagan Rail Trail initiative. The Okanagan Rail Trail has committed to raising up to \$5 million for trail construction and have already secured commitments of \$350,000 from two donors (Okanagan Rail Trail 2015).

From there, a variety of fund raising initiatives would be developed, from crowd-funding of specific sections or infrastructure to co-hosting with other charities on trail rides. In Nova Scotia, a Ride the Rails for Cancer event was cooperatively hosted by the cycling community and the provincial blood cancer society (QEII Health Sciences Centre Foundation 2015).

18. **Corporate trail builder partnership program.** Resource companies that are active in the vicinity of the trail could be solicited to contribute in-kind services when the opportunity arises. There are many forestry, mining/mineral exploration, energy, utility and construction operations active along the trail and in the past they have contributed various services, pro bono, for trail improvements. In 2014, Gorman Brothers graded the trail between Gillard forest service road (FSR) to Chute Lake for free, in return for recognition on the website of the Okanagan Trestle Tours (Bond 2015, pers. comm.). This partnership was possible because the company had crews and equipment in the area. Many sections of the TCT-FSR have been tenured as a utility corridor and companies like Fortis BC and Shaw Cable maintain their facilities on a regular basis. The Boundary Pathway Society has approached Fortis to lend engineering assistance for their planned paving/hardening of the Christina Lake to Grand Forks section of the trail. In 2012, the Grand Forks Community Trails Society partnered with local manufacturer Roxul Inc. for the construction of a trail head parking lot and kiosk at the 68<sup>th</sup> Ave. bridge (Moslin 2015, pers. comm.). Similar such partnerships have occurred in other communities. A formal program would consist of a short



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guide to help communities identify, recruit and recognize partners. The Similkameen Trail Society obtained funding from Fortis BC to install solar-powered LED bollards along the trail system within Keremeos to increase visibility in the evenings and enhance its appeal (Fortis BC 2015).

19. **User contributions to the trail.** There are some examples of rail trails in North America that charge user fees, but these are the exceptions rather than the rule because of their administrative complexity and potential cost to monitor and enforce, especially in rural areas. The TCT-KVR is an unlikely candidate for user fees because of its TCT designation and multiple-use crown

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land status. Attempting to separate resident from tourist use (under the assumption that the former already “pays” for the trail through other means) further complicates this issue. Technically, any commercial use of the trail that is crown land is supposed to be subject to rent payable to the Province for licences of occupation (LOO) issued under the Adventure Tourism Policy. This would essentially be similar to user permit fees for similar activities in provincial or national parks. But it is understood that the LOOs existing on the TCT-KVR were issued for stewardship purposes, under the Forest and Range Practices Act, and thus not subject to rents because stewards are not engaging in commercial activities (e.g. conducting trail tours for commercial gain). Tour operators who outfit trail users for self-guided experiences (i.e. they do not directly guide on the trail) also would not normally be subject to the Adventure Tourism Policy. As of today, therefore, trail users from outside BC do not pay for their use and similarly there is no direct contribution to development or maintenance. But that does not mean there is not a willingness to pay for a valued rail trail experience either by trail users themselves or by tour operators. TOTA should identify options and work with industry and government on instituting a practical, reasonable and sustainable revenue stream from trail visitors. The best practices review identified the following possible options:

- A nominal charge for the downloadable trail app
- Crowd funding for specific projects (e.g. signage, kiosks, infrastructure) to be co-hosted with corporate partners
- Percentage of any merchandising proceeds
- Booking commissions through the website/app

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User Fees  
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## 3.5 MARKETING

### 3.5.1 Rail Trail BC (RTBC) Brand development

The brand component of this strategy is intended to assist in creating an internationally export-ready tourism product associated with the region’s rail trail network. It is a given that rail trails, in conjunction with other initiatives and tourism products, have the capacity to draw both domestic and international guests to the region. RTBC’s goal, stated in the simplest terms, is to find ways to increase foot and bicycle traffic on the rail trail network.

The RTBC brand needs to establish what is unique, distinctive and memorable about the BC rail trail experience. To define the aura and stories that make our rail trails worth travelling to visit.

For this to happen it is necessary to elevate the tourism experience in both our large and small communities and to provide operators in all of those communities the opportunity to realize positive and sustainable revenue increases. The current situation regarding the rail trail network in BC is a fractured one with diverse user groups, multiple areas of jurisdiction and variable quality in trail surfaces. Stakeholders are far from unified in their short- and long-term objectives and are faced with daunting issues, bringing together these groups and individuals under a cohesive umbrella working with a common strategy will lead to positive results.

### **Why a rail trail brand**

- First and foremost RTBC needs to establish in the consumer's mind that there is a provincial rail trail network and not just local community driven initiatives using portions of the trail system. BC's rail trail potential is extensive, it projects well beyond the Kettle Valley Railway (KVR), with new sections emerging in the near future (Shuswap/North Okanagan Rail Trail) and existing, high quality sections (Columbia & Western Railway, Midway to Castlegar) already offering excellent rail trail experiences. The larger province-wide network needs to be made known and requires an identity.
- The new brand will strive to create a distinct identity for the region's and province's rail trail system and help coalesce a big picture of the system and its potential.

### **What the brand can do**

- Create an awareness in the consumer's mind that the region's rail trail system can provide a first class user experience.
- Provide much needed unity in a fractured environment.
- Get communities to buy into the big picture. A solid strategy that is supported by respected regional and provincial organizations (DBC, TOTA, RDOS etc.) will add momentum and attract fence-sitters to the fold. The brand will perform a key role by serving as the public face for this collective.
- Establish that there is an extended rail trail network in BC ready for public use. The KVR is only a part of the overall network, it is an important part undoubtedly but there is so much long term potential to the expansion of activities on the network that it serves the long range strategy best if the brand is able to encompass that potential.
- Create an awareness of the comprehensive technology solution. The brand will be constantly promoting [www.railtrailbc.ca](http://www.railtrailbc.ca)

### **How to establish the brand**

- Signage. Integrate the brand into existing signage as comprehensively as possible. Install new signage at key access points. The signage graphic will promote the new brand and the web app — [www.railtrailbc.ca](http://www.railtrailbc.ca).
- Our comprehensive technology solution. This web app (combined website and app capitalizing on the capabilities of HTML5) will be a complete rail trail guide to the region and ultimately to BC as a whole. The vision is that the web app will serve as the latest, most current info source for all things pertaining to the rail trail system.

The goal is to make the web app indispensable to trail users. The web app is the perfect environment for establishing the new RTBC brand. Apart from all the trail info, public information sections can keep interested users apprised of ongoing initiatives that relate to the strategy and its implementation.

- Marketing initiatives. From trade show displays, social media, and editorial coverage to advertising and promotions, there will be a single brand to help identify RTBC as a trusted, comprehensive source of information about BC's rail trail network.

### **Brand Rationale**

The driving concern with the brand rationale is to produce a design that is unique, simple and strong which will integrate well with the plethora of existing rail trail stakeholders. Current signage contains multiple trail stakeholder brands – Trans Canada Trail, RDOS, KVR Trail, municipalities etc. RTBC presence on signage is crucial, it needs to fit into the mix without being complex or requiring large areas of space to make the statement.

Also important to the brand rationale is the need to create a visual representation of the brand that is high level, all encompassing and forward looking. This means the design cannot try to create an impression of the user experience when that experience is highly variable today and in several years will have likely evolved into a new iteration. With wild and woolly sections linking to smooth, paved sections RTBC must develop brand visuals that rise above both types of conditions. RTBC marketing will deal with the task of creating realistic expectations for consumers, as trail conditions evolve so will the marketing but the brand visuals need to be crafted to signify the bigger picture of the potential rail trail network.



### **Brand core values**

The brand core values are the cornerstones on which the essence of the rail trail experience is structured. These values are somewhat unique to the BC rail trail environment, they establish what visitors can anticipate will be the nature of their overall experience, what they will see and what they might feel. There are three components – the heritage, the natural beauty and the challenge.

- The heritage – all of BC’s rail trails fit into the matrix of the province’s early history. The Shuswap & Okanagan Railway, Vancouver, Victoria and Eastern Railway, Columbia & Western Railway, Columbia & Kootenay Railway, Nicola, Kamloops and Similkameen Railway, Nakusp & Slocan Railway, Nelson & Fort Sheppard Railway and the Kettle Valley Railway all helped open up and connect BC’s southern interior communities. This network facilitated commerce and migration helping to make the province what it is today.
- The natural beauty – unquestionably BC has one of the most beautiful and varied natural landscapes in North America. With coastal temperate rainforests, arid interior zones, mountain ranges, huge valleys and large lakes all populated with a great variety of indigenous wildlife, the nature experience ranks as world class. Studies have shown that travellers are drawn to the sheer vastness of BC’s nature, its abundance and diversity. It’s the experience that they come for, the brand supports the framing of that experience for prospective visitors.
- The challenge – BC not only has nature it has wilderness. Research has found that while not all travellers plan to get out and immerse themselves in the wilderness, the fact that they can “rub shoulders” with it captures their imaginations. The rail trail network has the ability to cater to a wide variety of outdoor experience levels from easy day trips to intermediate weekend trips to week-long immersive adventures. The network isn’t fully market ready. But there is always room for the adventurous to elevate their level of commitment, this can encourage visitors to return for more during subsequent visits. The mystique that surrounds the Appalachian Trail or the Pacific Crest Trail is generated by the knowledge of how monumental those trail networks are, most users only ever experience a small portion of the AT or PCT but knowing they have tasted part of it provides a lasting memory. BC’s rail trails are just embarking on a period of concerted development, expansion and improvement, portions are fully prepared while others are still very wild and wooly. It is important to realistically present the rail trail network as a work-in-progress in order not to overinflate user expectations. However promoting the challenge component can build mystique while the full network is brought up to market readiness.

### **The brand symbol**

One of the most visible elements of the brand is the symbol/wordmark combination. Guided by the Destination BC brand, this draft concept is a recommendation only, however the final symbol will be an extension of the DBC brand style.

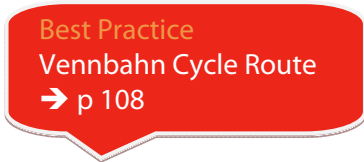




### **Deconstructing the brand symbol**

The symbol/wordmark addresses our brand objectives and core values:

- of increasing public awareness of the rail trail network with the clear typographic treatment of **RAIL TRAIL British Columbia**. It will be highly visible in the signage marketplace (see signage section) and in our technology solution environment (see technology solution section).
- of serving as an overarching brand. Its simplicity and clarity enables it to adopt the role of unifier of the disparate elements of the segmented “branding” landscape that currently exists on the rail trail network. The all encompassing connotation of RAIL TRAIL leaves no room for misunderstanding that the whole province-wide network is being referred to.
- typography – the main font, a customized creation, captures the look and feel of a trail system with its unique flair. It is a proprietary design for Rail Trail BC. The sub-title and URL font is Euphemia UCAS Regular. This font grouping elevates the wordmark from the sea of static, traditional typefaces and over-quirky, hand-painted letters to something that encapsulates our positioning of Cultured and Raw.
- colour – orca black, salmon red and forest green support the combined theme of BC heritage and natural beauty fulfillment.



### **3.5.2 Rail Trail BC (RTBC) signage draft**

A comprehensive signage strategy represents one of the significant ways that customer’s rail trail experiences can be enhanced. Clear and consistent way finding markers that present accurate information regarding location, direction to next waypoints, distances, safety issues etc. combined with interpretive display panels at significant locations will enhance user’s understanding of the

system they are travelling on and sense of history, heritage and environment that they take away with them.

Signage also represents an excellent opportunity to expose the rail trail network brand and to drive user's to [www.railtrailbc.ca](http://www.railtrailbc.ca) and our technology solution.

### **Challenges**

Adopting the best practices strategies of existing trail systems in the region and province only makes sense. With significant signage already present on the rail trail network it is expedient to integrate the new RTBC brand as much as possible with existing sign systems. Signage represents a capital investment and is labour intensive, RTBC intends to utilize partner hardware where possible and to implement new hardware only where no comprehensive system is yet in place.

### **Signage rationale**

The driving concern with the signage rationale is to produce a branded way finding system that represents best practices and which will integrate well with the plethora of existing rail trail stakeholders. In many cases current signage contains multiple trail stakeholder brands – Trans Canada Trail, RDOS, KVR Trail, municipalities etc. Our presence on signage is crucial, RTBC's brand needs to fit into the mix without being complex or requiring large areas of space to make a statement.

RTBC also needs to establish the rail trail network brand as prominently as possible in order to create a true regional and provincial network consciousness among customer's. RTBC wants users to view on-trail information consistently, feel comfortable with the notion that they are on track and that they are partaking of a portion of a much larger, ultimately world class rail trail experience. Consistently branded signage will complement marketing strategies by enhancing the rail trail network's aura among users and by driving them to [www.railtrailbc.ca](http://www.railtrailbc.ca) via sign notifications and QR codes.

### **3.5.3 Visual Identity Signage Recommendations**

The Rail Trail BC brandmark provides the foundation of the visual identity and should be applied cohesively across all mediums, including the way finding signage program. A Graphic Standards Manual for Signage should be produced.



**Colour Standard**

Primary Colours



Black  
50C 20M 20Y 100K  
0R 6G 16B  
000610 Hex



Forest Green  
87C 0M 75Y 31K  
0R 131G 87B  
008357 Hex



Grey  
60K  
147R 149G 152B  
939598 Hex

Secondary Colours



White Sand  
CMYK: 15, 15, 30, 15  
RGB: 188, 180, 158  
PMS: 7535



Shore Blue  
CMYK: 50, 10, 29, 10  
RGB: 118, 172, 169  
PMS: 563



Salmon Red  
CMYK: 20, 80, 75, 20  
RGB: 168, 72, 61  
PMS: 7608

**Integrating with existing on-trail signage sample**

The Rail Trail brand will be attached to existing wooden or metal supports as an extension to the top the post. This avoids the need for the repositioning of current sign plates and blazes on existing signage. Best practices in provincial trail system signage is favouring 6x6 inch or 4x4 inch square wooden posts that are then used for trail information plaques and blazes. The two-sided RTBC flag bolts onto the wooden post and provides a prominent position for the brand along with excellent visibility to trail users coming and going. The flag sign can also be attached to round metal poles with brackets where needed.

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The “flag” treatment for the Rail Trail brand is distinctive, highly visible and slightly reminiscent of the rail signal system used by railways today and in the past.



Examples of the RTBC flag sign on existing KVR on-trail signage.



**Integrating with existing entry point signage sample**

Entry points to the rail trail system tend to have existing large, prominent signs or kiosks. The complexity of these units precludes the effective addition of a small RTBC flag to the structure, the messaging would be overwhelmed.

In such cases, independent, free-standing RTBC sign posts will need to be installed. Using the standard 6x6 wooden post favoured by the RDOS Parks & Trails signage guidelines, the post will provide directional guidance, distance to next major entry point or community, QR code for accessing the web app, access restriction symbols and an area for stakeholder partners. Some of this information will depend on what information is presented on the adjacent “local” sign, access restriction symbols may be redundant and therefore not included.

The QR code should be accompanied by this text – **Access our comprehensive online resource [railtrailbc.ca](http://railtrailbc.ca).**

**Entry Point Identity Signage samples A + B**

For key entry locations where local groups already have a kiosk sign setup that includes mapping and other trail information, RTBC needs an independent sign composed of printed metal sign plates and wooden support post. Repetition of access restrictions may be redundant but basic direction, section, distance, QR code and stakeholder partner information should always be included.



**Entry Point Identity Signage sample C**

For key entry locations where no existing local signage is in place RTBC should install a prominent kiosk containing directional, section, distance, map, QR code, access restrictions and partner stakeholder information.

The sign construction consists of two 6x6 inch wooden posts, printed metal plates and an angled metal roof to shelter the unit from sun and rain.



**Primary Entry Point Identity Signage sample D**

For primary gateway locations, feature signs may be required. These would be highly visible locations where the signage would be prominently on view to the general public such as near major highway roadsides and in the vicinity of major urban centres. These locations would be prime opportunities to promote the RTBC brand and the existence of the whole rail trail network.

The sign construction consists of 8x8 inch wooden posts evoking railway ties, steel vertical posts symbolizing rails (one gunmetal grey and one RTBC green), field stone lower support with printed metal plates (the sign can be two-sided depending on location).

Sample D



**3.5.4 Rail Trail BC (RTBC) Technology solution draft**

The brand component of this strategy is intended to assist in creating an internationally export-ready tourism product associated with the region’s rail trail network. The RTBC brand needs to establish what is unique, distinctive and memorable about the BC rail trail experience. To define the aura and stories that make our rail trails worth travelling to visit.

The single most effective way to establish the brand and to provide potential and actual users of the rail trail network with the most useful tool for enjoying the experience is with a comprehensive technology solution. This solution involves the development of a rail trail web app. This web app will be a complete rail trail guide to the region and ultimately to BC as a whole. We envision the web app will serve as the latest, most current info source for all things pertaining to the rail trail system.



### **Web app defined**

In computing, a web application or web app is a client-server software application in which the client (or user interface) runs in a web browser.

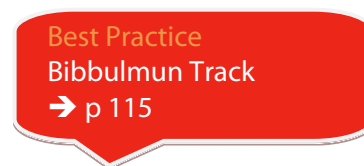
Web applications are popular due to the ubiquity of web browsers, and the convenience of using a web browser as a client to update and maintain web applications without distributing and installing software on potentially thousands of client computers is a key reason for their popularity, as is the inherent support for cross-platform compatibility and therefore the elimination of the need to update multiple tools. Common web applications include webmail, online retail sales, online auctions, wikis, instant messaging services and many other functions.

Web sites most likely to be referred to as “web applications” are those which have similar functionality to a desktop software application, or to a mobile app. HTML5 introduced explicit language support for making applications that are loaded as web pages, but can store data locally and continue to function while offline.

The goal is to make the web app indispensable to trail users. The web app is the perfect environment for establishing the new RTBC brand. It is also the best environment to create realistic expectations in the consumer, rail trail information within the app will clearly reveal trail conditions, proximity of amenities and services etc. Apart from all the trail info, public information pages can keep interested users apprised of ongoing initiatives that relate to the strategy and its implementation.

### **Web app features**

- GPS quality route finding and position locating (when in cell range);
- zoomable, detailed map driven by Google Maps including multilayered info tabs with switch-on-and-off capabilities;
- the ability to pre-download any section of the trail network for on-trail use when out of cell range;
- the ability to download GPS tracks for use on visitor’s GPS devices;
- trail surface conditions section-by-section, colour coded for easy reference;
- grade elevations for each section of the network;
- level of difficulty evaluations for each section;
- access points
- distance calculator
- available services along the route (info centres, public amenities, food, accommodations, camp sites etc.);



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- highlights of the rail trail network;
- operator and tour info including suggested/available itineraries;
- extent of cell phone coverage;
- history and interpretive experience highlights;
- social media components where users can post photos and stories to the usual social media networks or to private personal daily diaries. Social media integration includes an all-inclusive hub as well as regional/sectional page sliders filtering the stream on those selected pages to provide posts that relate to that zone only.
- location sensitive social media streams and search for services within a given range of the user;
- weather information, hazard warnings etc. plus the ability to show detours as necessary.

### **Website and mobile device compatibility**

The web app should be built with responsive design in order to produce good user experiences on all devices.



**Web app design concept**

Sample home page – desktop full screen view



Sample home page – smart phone view



Sample home page – tablet view

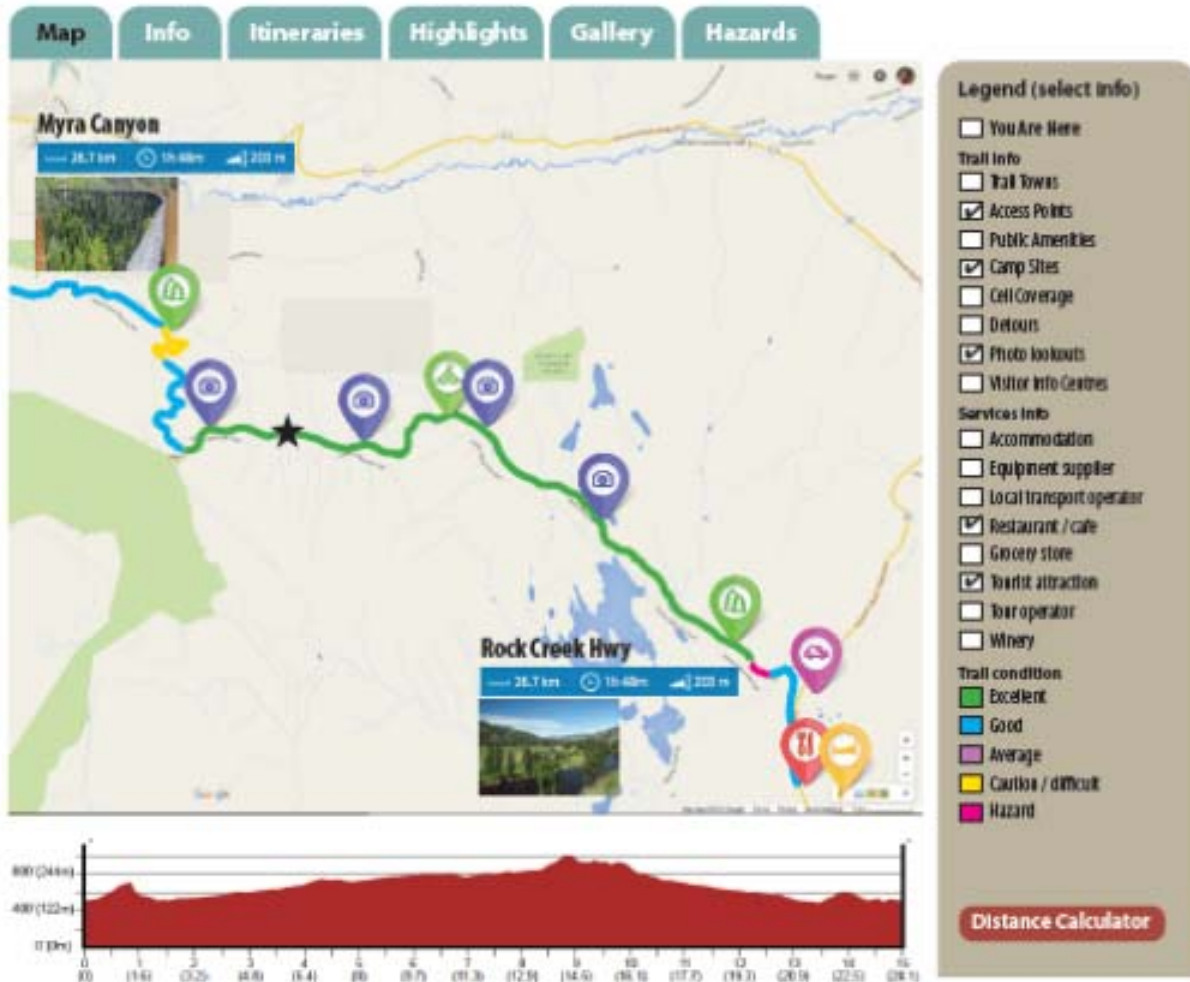


### Web app map concept

Design concept for web app trail section maps showing map information that can be toggled on and off using legend sidebar.

Tabs across the top of the map provide other info for that trail section. Mousing over (or tapping on) sections of the trail provide length and trail condition descriptions. Mousing over (or tapping on) map pins provide images or specific info on that location. The map is fully scrollable and zoomable on all devices.

Best Practice  
Biroto.eu  
→ p 114



## **Recommendations**

20. **Brand development.** The **RAIL TRAIL British Columbia** brand concept presented in the previous section serves as a baseline for further discussion. The final outputs would be considered within a potentially larger context of the rail trails vision and may require further development. The final symbol, wordmark, typefaces and colours should be endorsed by the province as part of the Strategy implementation phase. The designs presented were a result of research and consultation of the trails advisory committee for this project and the designs have potential to serve as the final solution.
21. **Rail trail graphic standards manual.** There will be many community, business, DMO and corporate partners who will be participating in the implementation of this plan, through marketing initiatives, trail development, signage and infrastructure improvements and fund raising. In almost all these cases the **RAIL TRAIL British Columbia** will be featured in a variety of print and digital environments. It is essential it be vigorously regulated so it develops over time as the standard, stand-alone wordmark. A digital graphic standards manual would specify the rationale for the brand, colours, typography requirements and guidelines for use in print and digital media. Downloads on a corporate website would be available, including specific treatments and specifications.
22. **Signage strategy.** The proposed signage designs outlined in the previous section provide a context for how a signage package could be integrated into existing trail system signage. Feedback from the advisory committee indicated the solution presented was practical, affordable and would likely be effective in presenting the brand throughout communities across the trail system, without reversing course or over-stepping those organizations already investing in existing signage. In fact, the proposed signage design promotes those relationships and adds to the sense of cooperative effort. Several stakeholders noted that with impending investments in signage at several spots on the trail, it was imperative to roll out and achieve buy-in on the designs sooner rather than later.
23. **The next steps for a technology solution.** The technology solution is a web app device that requires development beyond the design elements set out in the previous section of this Strategy. This includes both content and functionality.
  - Geospatial data sets exist for each content item in the design concepts, and there is no expectation that primary research would be required in order to take the web pages as presented live. The web app map sample on the previous page would link to data managed by DataBC to populate Trail Info coverages while Google information can be utilized for Services Info. Real time conditions on the trail can be managed through social media reporting which, while requiring moderation, at least represents a reasonable solution to what has historically been a problem for the TCT-KVR, that is, stale-dated information misrepresenting the trail. The web app must fully incorporate the responsive design elements presented here—our research indicated that the majority of rail trail sites

are not responsive to smart phone use. The remaining content is provided internally for example audio-visual materials, marketing copy, stories, social media histories and the like.

- The majority of functionality would be accommodated by the native web site architecture, allowing users to either deep-dive into the content whether it be itineraries, communities, stories or different segments of the trail itself. The Call to Action, similar to DBC's **Book Now!** button, would be included in the Itinerary pages rather than on the main landing page. It would include a booking engine for guided tours or directions for clicking through to individual service providers for those visitors who are seeking a self-guided experience.
- **Social media program.** Develop a social media program that engages local operators using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Trip Advisor for destinations. Monitor and respond to the destination online reputation. As part of the [Tourism Business Essentials](#) series, Destination BC offers an Online Reputation Management guide, introductory and advanced workshops and webinars for operators and destinations. DBC's social media team will be launching quarterly webinars on various social media topics available for free to tourism businesses and organizations. They will also be posted on corporate website. There is also the opportunity to feed information through the [TOTA](#) social media program.

The social media component will also incorporate a hub (a web page or image slider imbedded in the site that stream a mashup of filtered social media content from all RTBS social media sources to pertinent sections of the web app). This is especially useful for connecting users in the midst of a rail trail experience with other travellers; for disseminating time-sensitive information on special opportunities, events, gaming etc.; and for increasing the level of engagement possible for trail users. The blending of multiple social media streams in one location is very convenient and maximizes investment in social media initiatives.

24. **Online Travel Agency (OTA) strategy.** OTAs are now an enormous factor in tourism marketing and it cannot be ignored that trip decisions regarding trail visitation will occur indirectly through OTA access to the airline, transportation, accommodation and other hospitality sectors. Exposure to OTA services can of course be achieved by including these searchable services in TCT-KVR packages and itineraries. Encouraging customer reviews and responding to reviews on a regular basis would provide good exposure on major sites such as Trip Advisor and contribute to a high Net Promoter Score. The KVR already has an excellent online reputation but this could be further leveraged and expanded through an OTA initiative.
25. **Gamification.** The web app would have the capacity for a game that engages visitors and heightens interest in the trail experience that might not normally be communicated in traditional media or the web app itself. Mobile games are a rapidly growing gaming segment and they have attracted a diverse audience well beyond the public image of young male gamers. Designing a game for the TCT-KVR is about using the latest technology to change people's motivation and behaviour in a playful and fun way. It can

Best Practice  
Hadrian's Wall Trails App  
→ p 115

feature pre-, during- or post-trip themes that are destination-based or service-based. Some possibilities for the TCT-KVR include:

- A guided tour of the KVR by a train engineer and other local characters—this can bring history and culture alive and allow the user to explore individual communities, ghost towns, railway architecture, and the many personal stories that are rarely interpreted for the average visitor.
- A self-guided tour of the full KVR that features the fascinating landscapes, geology, flora and fauna of the trail.
- Gaming in specific cultural heritage sites to encouraging exploration and social interactions, something that would have broad appeal for leading EQ segments.
- A rewards game, such as that used by McDonald's, to have participants create storylines using their menu items, with the winner(s) featured in advertising. Winners received gift certificates.
- Gaming to contribute to charity partners such as stewardship or environmental groups.

26. **Web app integration with local DMOs and other partners.** The purpose of the web app will be to serve as the go-to source for trip-planning and rail trail experience information in the Thompson Okanagan, and specifically to the TCT-KVR. The web app will feature data and a call to action that currently does not exist among any existing websites and this content and functionality will create the value proposition that encourages partners to participate in TCT-KVR marketing and development. But the web app is not intended to duplicate or replace local DMO, local government or operator websites—it will still be necessary to engage, hold and transfer a web visitor who wishes to find out more about opportunities within the different sub-regions. These partner websites will want to be conveniently linked to the web app for referral traffic. The alignment should be similar to the *Discover Route 97* website, where Signature Experiences and other Things to Do encourage visitors to find out more and further engage their travel planning at local websites.

27. **Content management protocol that will correct inaccurate and outdated trail information while boosting website traffic.** Make contact with provincial and regional cycling, hiking and trail organizations with websites to coordinate the distribution of mapping and other trail information. This would include Trails BC, Trans Canada Trail Foundation and Cyclo Touring BC.

28. **Exposure to US and European publications and websites that specialize in off-road trails.** Major sites such as [trailpeak.com](http://trailpeak.com) and [trails.com](http://trails.com) do not list or have outdated information for the KVR. A catalogue of sites should be compiled, GPS data uploaded to populate and update map resources where appropriate, and factual information corrected or updated. The latter website above still has an entry stating Myra Canyon is impassable due to the fires of 2003.

29. **Early stage funding strategy.** The immediate priority for the implementation of this Strategy is to secure financing for branding and the web app, with signage to be developed once a

program can be agreed to by partner organizations. A unit cost estimate of the funds needed for these initiatives is provided in Appendix A.

### 3.5.5 Target Markets

#### Key Issues

Chapter 3 provided a profile of visitor markets in the Thompson Okanagan, cycling markets in BC and cycling trends worldwide that have implications for positioning and marketing the TCT-KVR rail trail. Cycling participation rates and trip motivation quotients tend to be higher among Europeans and to a lesser extent Americans than for Canadians, but sheer numbers suggest that regional markets represent the greatest opportunity to build trail visitation for the industry as a whole. It is recognized that individual operators may specialize in certain markets and may therefore have a customer profile that deviates from this expected norm. However, a review of the industry survey, of which 30 respondents provided guided tours or services on the trail, indicates that visitors who use the trail very much reflect the geographic distribution of the average Thompson Okanagan visitor, that is at least four out of five being from BC and Alberta.

The current market for cycling as a trip activity in the Okanagan is estimated at approximately 350,000 but with better tour opportunities, services and amenities that could triple to be more in line with overall participation rates of those who are visiting. Importantly, the likelihood of attracting new or incremental visitors (i.e. those who come to BC and the Thompson Okanagan specifically because of the trail, that is as a trip motivator) would be significantly improved with a better trail experience.

#### Recommendations

30. **Regional markets from BC and Alberta.** EQ explorer types for BC (Free Spirits, Authentic Experiencers, Cultural Explorer's, Rejuvenators) and Alberta (No Hassle Travellers, Authentic Experiencers, Gentle Explorers, Free Spirits) offer the greatest potential for expanding trail use through the alignment of market and product development. These two geographic markets represent approximately 85% of all travellers to the Thompson-Okanagan and they also cite cycling as an preferred activity when visiting the region in greater numbers than either their US or overseas counterparts.
31. **Canadian and international markets that already come to the Thompson Okanagan and have high participation rates in cycling and trail-based activities.** US, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, and Australia represent key non-domestic markets with high interest in and trip motivation for quality rail trail experiences. Some TOTA tour operators have been very successful catering to these visitors, and although their volumes are small their awareness of and appreciation for rail trails is high and their spending generally higher than domestic visitors. Destination Canada provides EQ profiles of Canadian, US, Australian and European markets to assist with product and market development.
32. **Opportunities related to cycling trends and TCT-KVR trail use.** Asian, Mexican and South American markets are gradually increasing their share of BC visitation and should be tracked



for their participation in trail-based activities. EQ profiles are not available for these markets and cycling and hiking participation rates are unknown. Visitation to the Thompson Okanagan will expand over time and niche opportunities may emerge.

### 3.5.6 Marketing Content and Support

#### **Key Issues**

As the RDMO for the Thompson Okanagan, TOTA has a clear stake in marketing directly to potential rail trail visitors and to those in the travel trade that act as intermediaries in the planning, purchasing and delivery of tourism experiences. Working with the travel trade and digital channels is an obvious way to start promoting the “new” TCT-KVR while expanding overall market reach. The EQ profiles indicate that travel planning is heavily oriented to the internet and digital media so it is expected that conventional print forms of advertising and supporting collateral will be focused on niche initiatives, for example new events or participation in campaigns led by other organizations like local DMOs.

In marketing the TCT-KVR, the availability of market-ready and export-ready products that will engage consumers and market intermediaries such as tour wholesalers is critical. TOTA can play a valuable role in helping tourism operators meet export-ready requirements by educating them about retail, rack and net rates and understanding how commissions are worked into pricing. Most of the experienced tour companies in the Thompson Okanagan are already export-ready, but according to the business survey about one third of tourism suppliers were not. It is this group that will be catering to semi and self-guided trail visitors who will represent most of the increased trail use. They should be familiar with market and export-ready business practices, for example, managing retail pricing so relationships further down the supply chain and value perceptions among consumers are maintained. This is an obvious focus area for TOTA to ensure industry, and communities, are ready and able to serve visitors interested in a quality experience on the trail.

#### **Recommendations**

33. **Image and video bank targeted to the BC and Alberta EQ explorer types.** Imagery is a key component for an effective marketing, and the style of defined by the EQ explorer types is specific. Building an inventory of images and videos that portrays the destination by its setting and travel experiences by season will provide the foundation for visual communications. Imagery is as new visitor experiences are identified and taken to market.

34. **Trail history and interpretive stories as marketing content.** Stories and interpretive information about the KVR and its relation to settlement and industry patterns, First Nations culture and the ecological/environmental are all important elements of a rail trails narrative that can strongly resonate in the market place. Table 9 shows that describing and interpreting the historical and cultural context of the TCT-KVR would particularly appealing to US and overseas visitors. While there is a plethora of resources (e.g. books, websites, archives) available to the dedicated

Best Practice  
Bruce Trail Conservancy  
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researcher, the fact is that most of these stories are beyond the reach of most visitors. TOTA would have the opportunity to animate the rail trail experience by identifying a core story series, compile the written and visual resources to background the story, create the stories following EQ guidelines and distributing the stories through the website to consumers, media and travel trade.

35. **Destination Canada Explorer Quotient research materials.** Targeting visitors based on the psychographic profiles, combined with demographic and geographic profiles, will continue to provide insights into how to target markets for the region.
36. **Printed trail map.** No matter how sophisticated and user-friendly digital visitor services are, there will always be a component of the market that will prefer to have in their possession a physical trail map. Trail users always run the risk of having a dead battery or damaged smartphone in which case a hard copy backup can be very useful. All content and artwork would come from the technology solution, featuring access points, trail conditions and available services. Editorial content such as attractions, recreation features and key points of interest would be included. Topographic in design, the map can be 24x36" folding to rack size 4x9". Inset maps would show important community features. The map can also double as a poster for framing or window display at businesses and organizations along the trail.
37. **Blog and newsletter.** There will be a considerable volume of events and news as this Strategy is implemented and milestones reached. An online newsletter can keep stakeholders informed of progress while a blog can be used to reach multiple audiences, including trail users and potential visitors. The blog of course can be linked to the HelloBC.com Listings Program.
38. **Media relations** –Editorial coverage is worth thousands of dollars in equivalent advertising space and readers have more confidence in editorial copy versus advertising claims. This is especially true for major EQ segments (i.e. Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers). Media relations will include responding to media requests for information, hosting familiarization (FAM) tours and generating the interest of media in order to have stories written and published. Hosting media requires cooperation amongst transportation, accommodation, food services and tour businesses in order to be successful. Typically, Destination BC and TOTA will coordinate media trips and contact the community and operators directly, however, having support materials for these organizations or dealing with media directly is required. In order to serve the needs for media the following tactics are recommended.
  - Establish a media web page on the website. A media web page is critical to display the soft copy version of key content, which may include: quick facts, pre-written stories, story ideas, suggested itineraries, press releases, contacts, web links and availability of high-resolution digital photography for print use and B-roll for broadcast, if available.
  - Utilize Destination BC media programs. Travel media relations play an integral role in maximizing consumer and trade awareness of British Columbia as a top travel destination

through unpaid media coverage in key markets. Travel media include freelance journalists, travel editors, broadcasters, producers and travel trade media. The Destination BC Travel Media Relations program includes activities such as attending key media events, initiating and organizing trips for qualified media, building relationships with key media, and positioning unique story ideas with media. In addition, this division develops press kits and image bank materials for distribution to appropriate travel media. The Destination BC Visiting Journalist Program provides support of eligible costs to bring media to communities, primarily by air or ground transportation. Industry is expected to provide media with accommodations, meals and activities. Destination BC distributes a monthly email communication to their media database. Story ideas and press releases can be sent to the media department. New product information should always be forwarded for story ideas.

- Host Media FAM Tours. Media FAM tours are coordinated by TOTA with Destination BC, having a key contact at the community level working with operators and these organizations is an efficient way to utilize Destination BC programs.

39. **Media partnerships.** As a complement to media relations, strategic partnerships with high-profile media can create a lasting positioning and marketing legacy. In its 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, the TCTS identified national and local media coverage through partnerships with the Globe and Mail, SHAW and other partners (TCTS 2012). Trails BC . Ideally, potential media partners would be in a position to reach out and help deliver the message about the trail and its exceptional potential. The TCT-KVR is visually dramatic so print or digital media with a visual presence of medium is preferred, and there should be relatively good exposure to preferred target markets. Opportunities to complement media partnerships of other trail organizations would provide leverage to marketing. The written agreement would state what each party would provide and set the ground rules for collaboration. TOTA could offer exclusivity of content materials (pictures, b-roll, histories/stories), naming of a signature experience or trail segment, media partner exposure on the website and during conferences, festivals and events, and exclusive interviews with trail leaders. In return, TOTA would seek to receive a series of articles or interviews, media programme devoted to the TCT-KVR or the placement of promotional materials on the partner's website.

40. **Corporate Partnership Program.** There are numerous opportunities for negotiating corporate partnerships for the TCT-KVR, with logical links to trail groups, transportation (e.g. air services, airports, transit), major tourism operators (wineries, resorts), recreation, outdoor and health organizations, government (e.g. BC Parks), institutional (e.g. universities, colleges), consumer lifestyle (outdoor stores, bike shops, clothing, fitness), local resource companies (discussed further in Section 4.4.1) and conservation groups. Developing partnerships can be time consuming both setting up and maintaining so a program with multiple potential targets should be kept modest and manageable within the resources of TOTA and its implementation partners. A strategy brief should be prepared, along with a target list drawn from the above, with consideration of the following parameters:

- The objectives of the program, which should be in three areas: unrestricted capital for trail infrastructure, marketing leverage, visitor services and experience enhancement.
- Criteria for screening and recruiting partners. It is not the number of corporate partners that indicates success, the overall value and credibility they bring to the trail vision.
- Discussion points on the quid pro quo (i.e. what does each party bring to the table that makes for a win-win situation).
- Provide a range of opportunities for the relationships from gift giving to employer-supported volunteering.
- Procedures for optimizing and leveraging the partnership.
- Procedures for measuring success of the partnership.
- Procedures for recognizing and promoting the relationship through communications and marketing activities.

## **3.6 PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT**

### **3.6.1 Tours and Experiences**

#### **Key Issues**

In order to complement physical improvements to the TCT-KVR, it will also be necessary to encourage a greater selection of services, like guided and semi-guided tours, that will appeal to domestic and international markets who are interested in experiencing the trail. The survey included 22 respondents who indicated they had guided guests on the TCT-KVR. Another 10 respondents indicated that while they don't guide directly, they do provide services to guests using the trail. There are dozens more service businesses such as accommodators, wineries, food and beverage establishments, and rental services, who could play a more active role in cultivating tours and experiences on the trail. Front-line tour operators face many challenges building trail business—capital can be difficult to access, marketing reach is limited especially for small outfits, and establishing productive relationships with market intermediaries can take more time and patience than proprietors are willing to invest. The fact that cash flow is constrained by a limited operating season means financial planning is crucial to a successful business model.

A market-ready trail requires market-ready and export-ready operators and service businesses. One of the objectives of this Strategy is to use technology and direct improvements to the trail to induce operators to compete and innovate so that visitors have the best possible experience. Increased visitation and spending would then translate directly into increased occupancies and yields, employment and further investment by industry. Creating this virtuous business and investment cycle requires a robust and engaged industry that strives to exceed professional standards of operations, marketing and customer service. This has already occurred in the wine industry and among successful destination resorts across the region, so a critical path has already been paved for guiding the rail trail concept to greater heights.

## **Recommended Actions**

41. **Canada 150 Celebration.** Canada will have its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2017 and various levels of government, communities and the private sector are gearing up to celebrate the event. There are several opportunities for involvement:

- Co-host an already-planned celebration with trail organizations;
- Co-host or participate in an already-planned community or regional celebration; and
- Co-host an existing or new trail-related event.

There are several existing events that could be partnered, including:

- Okanagan Trestle Tours
- Kettle Mettle Dirty Fondo
- Prospero GranFondo Axel Merckx
- Challenge Penticton
- Oliver Half Iron Triathlon

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Rails to Trails Conservancy  
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TCTS does not have plans for a celebration because its focus is on trail completion (Kaplan November 29, 2015, pers. comm.). It could, however, be asked to co-sponsor or support a TCT-KVR celebration. The federal government's Canada 150 Fund is a potential source of support and eligible projects are not limited to celebratory events. A former potential source of funding is the federal government's Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program. Applications in Western Canada were closed in June, 2015 but the program should be monitored in case the new government commits new resources to infrastructure investment, which was a major promise during the 2015 election campaign.

42. **Fastest Known Time.** Fastest Known Time (FKT) is an rapidly growing personal race phenomenon that is especially popular among distance runners who prefer not to engage in traditional races. A route is picked and covered as fast as possible. There is a website Fastest Known Time<sup>2</sup> dedicated to record keeping for runners. Sponsors such as North Face and Salomon have followed suit and actively support FKT efforts because the storylines often warrant elevated press and attention. Public awareness is also growing with videos, blogs and other social media involved. And of course once a FKT has been documented it represents a compelling challenge for racers of all stripes. FKT has entered the cycling community now as well—the Katy trail in Missouri documents FKTs for riders (Katy Trail 2015). TOTA could sponsor or co-sponsor a cyclist for the full length (or segments) of the KVR, post a FKT on the website and create an ongoing challenge on the website to generate interest among extreme athletes.

43. **Product packaging and itineraries.** Travellers are increasingly seeking experiences based on an aggregation of individual products and services into a unified purchase decision. It reflects

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<sup>2</sup> <http://fastestknowntime.proboards.com>

the growing preference among aging travellers especially for the bundling of the entire visitor experience into a simple, single purchase decision. For the destination, this requires the provision of coordinated products and services, when they would normally be provided by individual operators or service providers. The objective of packaging is to offer an integrated, interesting product to encourage visitors to first make the travel decision, second to engage in higher yield product purchases and third to maximize their length of stay.

As a regional DMO, TOTA would play a market intermediary role promoting, distributing and selling itineraries through the website, app and other marketing activities. Participating operators must be market and preferably export-ready so that pricing is unified through all digital media and delivery is seamless. The call to action and booking service provided through the website and app is a strong inducement for operators to participate in the package. Supplementary research would be needed to customize itineraries for domestic and international EQ types. In some cases they could be fully guided, in others semi or self-guided according to the target profile. The following dimensions can be scoped and then assembled into a set of itineraries that can be featured on the website and linked to the call for action.

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- Establish guidelines for participating in itineraries through the web app, including commission structure for bookings made through the Call to Action and protocols for driving traffic through to individual service providers websites (e.g. hotels, rental shops) for visitors who are interested in a self-guided experience.
- Compile itineraries matching EQ profiles:
  - **Free Spirits.** Self or semi-guided detailed itineraries, links to dining, wineries, spas, lake and river activities, superior accommodation, emphasize group experience, inform of trail challenges where appropriate (“face the challenge”) since they are willing to take some risk. Amenable to multi-day, point-to-point trail or hub-spoke travel (to take advantage of supplementary local activities). A major market segment globally, BC’s largest segment and Alberta’s fourth.
  - **Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers.** Self-guided itineraries, links to parks, museums, campsites, First Nations, settlement and railway history/culture, emphasize the landscape and nature observation and the trail as a journey. Will live like the locals, not luxury or comfort oriented. Amenable to multi-day, point-to-point trail or hub-spoke travel. Major market segments globally, third and fourth-largest segments in BC segment, third and sixth in Alberta.
  - **Rejuvenators and No-Hassle Travellers.** Guided tours, package pricing, shorter tours, safety conscious, enjoy pampering, hedonistic, better suited to nature observation than culture/history, quality but not luxury accommodations. Single-day tours or multi-day hub and spoke close in to major communities. A quarter of BC and Alberta markets.

- Identify and recruit participating operators

44. **TOTA market research program.** TOTA has customized user profiles utilizing Environics Analytics Research that can help operators target trail markets. This research is unique to the Thompson Okanagan and can give operators an edge in their marketing activities. It can help strategic direction and provide information that will support market planning and execution.

45. **Operator certification program.** TOTA could pattern the program off of Quebec’s Route Verte ***Bienvenue cyclistes!*** which certifies accommodation establishments within five kms from Route Verte that wish to attract cyclists. Both fixed roof accommodations and campgrounds are included and abide by a relatively simple but consistent set of standards for visitor information, storage, repair, transportation and food service. At campgrounds guaranteed accommodation such as is widely available on US rail trails should be promoted. Certification ensures the use of branded signage and participation in packaging and itineraries.



Best Practice  
New Zealand Cycle Trail  
→ p 111

46. **Webinar series for trail products and experiences.** TOTA regularly offers webinars to stakeholders that facilitate the adoption of innovative practices and improve the competitiveness of operators. Webinars are cost effective and convenient for operators who are pressed time or who wish to avoid travel. Content could be developed by TOTA for region-specific topics, but existing content for many trail issues and initiatives can be accessed through other organizations such as the American Trails Store<sup>3</sup>, government agencies, or other services providers. Third-party partners could host the webinars on topics appropriate for trail stewards, communities, tourism operators and guide operators, ranging from funding trails and managing conflicts to event coordination and infrastructure placement.

47. **Emerging and niche uses.** TOTA should monitor and promote opportunities related to both e-bike handicap use of trails on trail segments where they can be accommodated, especially in urban areas where there are connections to other greenways and transportation corridors. E-bikes are not considered motorized in the conventional sense and are accepted on multi-use trails but of course they are limited in time and distance travelled. They have long been used in Europe, where there are restrictions on speed. The use of this technology requires access to hire stations, storage and battery exchanges, opportunities which could be promoted to local businesses should demand warrant. However, there is considerable controversy especially in mountain biking circles about the legitimacy of ebikes as an acceptable trail use. If properly positioned and used, ebikes could be offered by resorts and bike shops as a soft experience that does not compromise the trail for others while potentially introducing them to other modes of trail use.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.americantrails.org/store/webinars/>

### 3.7 TRACKING PROGRESS

#### **Key Issues**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an essential part of any strategy or program. M&E involves the systematic and regular collection of data that allows the organization to establish a baseline, measure change, understand cause-effect relationships, effect the allocation of scarce resources, inform decision-making and communicate with stakeholders and partners. It is really about being relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable.

For this strategy and its many initiatives, a set of metrics, indicators and data sources is required as the basis for monitoring. Other than Myra Canyon, there is no documented use of the TCT-KVR and therefore no baseline that could be used to track future change. There are numerous methods and technologies for tracking trail use but each entails costs that to this point in time have not been seen as justifiable by the province or by communities. The fact that use levels are modest on many parts of the trail has contributed to this feeling. Indirect indicators such as VIC enquiries and tour operator client levels can be used but as with any M&E program they have to be explicitly and systematically tracked.

#### **Recommended Actions**

48. **Logic Model.** A simple logic model around which performance measurement can be arranged should be prepared. A typical model would describe inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, the latter of which should be clearly linked to the goals of this Strategy. Once the outcomes are established, indicators and data sources can be listed. Key data necessary to establish the baseline are described below.
49. **Trail counts.** It will be necessary to develop baseline use data on key trail segments so future use trends can be documented. RSTBC is in the process of installing counters at several trail points, which will be useful in establishing a current baseline. A methodology can also be developed for estimating resident and visitor use components for this data.
50. **Trail surveys.** It is also recommended that periodic direct observation surveys be conducted at automated counter locations, or other locations, as necessary. The surveys can be of short duration such as single days for the purpose of building a user profile by residency, mode, age, gender, trip purpose and other trip characteristics. Information on potential trail and experience improvements could also be included. DBC research services could provide assistance in establishing an ongoing survey program.
51. **Operator surveys.** Periodic operator surveys should also be scheduled by TOTA. Quantitative indicators such as trail use, new investment and visitation will be important for tracking but they will need to be supplemented by qualitative indicators provided by those directly involved in guiding and other providing services to trail visitors.



52. **Visitor Centre tracking.** Request that Visitor Centres include TCT-KVR as an information category in their VC statistics. This could provide an additional metric at relatively low cost with the opportunity for additional insights from trail visitors.
53. **Annual Forum.** Monitoring and evaluation is based primarily on benchmarking and measuring indicators for change over time—it is oriented toward quantifiable metrics. It would be advisable to seek out qualitative feedback from industry and partners about the progress being made on trail development and suggestions for tactical changes to strategic initiatives. An Annual Forum should be held in conjunction with the TOTA AGM and Tourism Summit, where trail interests can gather to share experiences, best practices, marketing programs and emerging trends on rail trails.
54. **Market and trail development tracking.** Measuring marketing and trail development activities will furnish the data required to inform strategic planning, decision making, partner relations and reporting. The following basic measures can be monitored and included in the reporting process:
- Trail improvements and investments
  - Trail class (km)
  - Use (visitation), spending
  - Website analytics
  - Participation rates in marketing programs
  - Number of market-ready businesses
  - Unpaid media coverage (paid equivalents)
  - Print distribution
  - Social media statistics
  - Industry Feedback
  - Partnerships established

## 4 REFERENCES

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BCCC	BC Cycling Coalition
BCORMA	BC Off Road Motorcycle Association
BEDC	Boundary Economic Development Committee
BCTFA	BC Transportation Finance Authority
BTC	Bruce Trail Conservancy
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CTBC	Cyclo Touring BC Program
CWR	Columbia & Western Railway
DBC	Destination BC
FKT	Fastest Known Time
FLNRO	Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
FRPA	Forests and Range Practices Act
KVR	Kettle Valley Railway
LOO	Licence of Occupation
LRMP	Land and Resource Management Plan
MOTI	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
ORV	Off-road Vehicle
RDCO	Regional District Central Okanagan
RDMO	Regional Destination Management Organization
RDOS	Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
RSTBC	Recreation Sites and Trails BC
SIDIT	Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust
TAC	Trail Advisory Committee
TCTS	Trans Canada Trail Society
TOTA	Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association

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Sielmann, Henry. President, Summerland Trans Canada Trail Society. Telephone interview. November 23, 2015.

Skerbinek, Angela. Manager, Research, Planning & Evaluation, Destination British Columbia. Email communication, September 18, 2015.

Trent, Tennessee. Trails Manager, RSTBC. Several telephone conversations, August 2015 to January 2016.

#### 4.4 COMMUNITY WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

Christina Lake		
Cindy Alblas	Dawsha Hunt	Chris Moslin
Sasha Bird	Les Johnson	Sean Noble
Heather Cannell	Kim Kinakin	Connie Riestener
Wendy Darbyshire	Leon Lebrun	Ciel Sander
Bob Dupee	Angele Marcoux	Kathleen Smythe
Cliff Enquist	Brian McAndrew	Len Strzeler
Sara Enquist	Phil McIntyre-Paul	Serge Touchette
Cavan Gates		
Midway		
Ross Elliott	Leon Lebrun	Heather Remillard
Sandy Elzinga	Ken McWhirter	Ciel Sander
Vicki Gee	Corrine McWhirter	Barry Saville
Terry Haffetl	Phil McIntyre-Paul	Curtis Sharp
Pat Henley	Jim Nathorst	Julie Sharp
Bob Jendyk	Joyce Oliver	Jim Smith
Noreen Krueger	Al Oliver	Ed Smith
Pete Krueger	Rebecca Relkov	Serge Touchette
Penticton		
Paul Barber	Helena Konanz	John Rasmussen
Ron Barkwill	Merv Kowalski	Gary Reed
Roland Dheilly	Patti Kowalski	Doreen Reed
Maria Diakonow	Karla Kozakevich	Des Reigh
Jessie Dunlop	Tom Matthews	Gail Scott
Don Gemmell	Eileen Meehan	Roy Schmuland
David Gregory	Doris Muhs	Justin Shuttleworth
Marilyn Hansen	Lisa Navin	Eric Sorensen
Wayne Harvey	Janet Peake	Cheryl Wiebe
Nora Hunt-Haft	Colleen Pennington	Lindy Wilson
Lisa Jaager	Dale Philbrook	Mark Woods
Andrew Jakubeit	Mervyn Philbrook	Phillip Young
Duane Johns	Max Picton	
Kelowna		
Carla Carlson	Ingrid Jarrett	Rosemary Paterson
Linda Digby	Ed Kruger	John Perrot
Robert Fine	Leon Lebrun	Salina Petschulat
Trevor Hanna	Chris Lewis	Henry Sielmann
Gord Hotchkiss	Stephanie Oslund	Serge Touchette
		Kelly Watt
Princeton		
Frank Armitage	Kim Maynard	Lori Thomas
Vic Bartel	Phil McIntyre-Paul	Jerome Tjerkstra
Bob Coyne	Bob Miller	Serge Touchette
Rosemary Doughty	Douglas Pateman	Lyle Zimmerman
Leon Lebrun		
Merritt		
Angela Fountain	Phil McIntyre-Paul	Anoop Sekhon
Terry Frizzell	Neil L Menard	Murphy Schewchuk
Etelka Gillespie	Petch Moyes	Terry Wardrop
Karl Gropp	Ginny Prowal	Melvina White

## APPENDIX A-IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Costs for the implementation of this strategy are outlined in Table 3. These are unit cost estimates based on understanding of parameters at time of writing.

### Estimated Costs of Implementation

Item	Costs		Timing	Description
	2016	Annual 2017-2022		
<b>Organization</b>	\$15,000		2016-2017	Primarily legal, administrative for establishing Trust
	\$500,000		2016-2022	Seed capital for the Trust.
	\$15,000	\$15,000	2016-2022	Meetings and annual forum.
<b>Destination</b>	\$30,000--\$40,000	\$15,000	2016-2019	Trail plans for Boundary and Merritt, grant writer
	Trail costs – to be determined		2017-2022	Requires formal capital plan—can vary widely according to proximity of local materials
<b>Marketing</b>				
<b>Branding</b>	\$15,000		2016	Final rail trails brand
<b>Signage</b>	\$20,000-\$30,000		2017-2022	Need for coordination with communities/stewards
<b>Web app</b>	\$40,000		2016-2022	Web site and app; no need for proof of concept or technology; pilot or beta program
<b>Marketing Content &amp; Promotion</b>	Cash costs - \$50,000	\$5,000	2017-2022	Image and video bank, map guide, historical content and stories, promotion of experiences, blog, newsletter and travel media relations. Ongoing maintenance and optimization required.
<b>Experiences</b>	Cash costs - \$20,000	\$15,000	2017-2022	Canada 150 Celebrations, Fastest Known Time event, webinar series. Ongoing product packaging, itineraries, and certification program

## APPENDIX B - FIRST-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION

All of the preceding initiatives are considered important in that they address different aspects of trail development, whether they be land use, amenity improvements, industry cooperation or marketing. Even so, there is some logical sequencing that should take place, especially in the first year, that generate some positive momentum and measurable progress. Table 2 presents recommendations that are meant to lay the groundwork for implementation through enhanced organization capacity, partnership development and technology solutions.

### Priority Initiatives in Year 1 of Implementation

Initiative	TOTA/Trust Role	DBC Role
<b>Organization</b>		
Trail advisory committee	• Lead	• Assist—participate in committee
First-year work plan	• Lead	• None
Local government endorsement	• Lead	• Assist—co-sign letter of invitation requesting support
Rail Trails Trust	• Lead	• Assist—provide guidance on scope, mandate and articles of incorporation
Policy brief on future TCT-KVR rail trail development	• Lead	• Assist—review by policy personnel, referral to other ministries for comment, feedback
Policy brief on future rail trails development		
First Nations Partnership	• Lead	• None
MOU with First Nations		
Coordinated planning with the Kootenays	• Assist—participate in and review communications	• Lead—provide policy direction on how to involve and integrate rail trail planning and development
Working partnership with off-road vehicle organizations	• Lead	• Assist—participate in discussions with provincial off-road groups
<b>Destination</b>		
Priority trail segments	• Lead	• None
Multi-partner capital plan	• Lead	• Assist—identify funding options within government, facilitate fund raising



Initiative	TOTA/Trust Role	DBC Role
<b>Marketing</b>		
Brand development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist—provide feedback on symbol, wordmark, typefaces and colours</li> </ul>
Rail trail graphic standards manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist—review manual drafts</li> </ul>
Signage strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Next steps for a technology solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist—identify best options for obtaining geospatial data sets, preferred Call to Action and social media capabilities</li> </ul>
Image and video bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist—coordinate with DBC digital asset management system</li> </ul>
Trail history and interpretive stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<b>Experiences</b>		
Canada 150 Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist—help identify event and senior government funding options, participate in the event committee (if formed), identify opportunities for partnering with similar 150 events in other regions</li> </ul>
Fastest Known Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist—co-sponsor</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B – BASELINE

### STUDY AREA

The Thompson Okanagan region served by TOTA is depicted in the map below. This area ranges from Christina Lake and the Shuswap to the east, Cache Creek and Princeton to the west, Mount Robson in the north, and Osoyoos in the south. The Thompson Okanagan is coterminous with the Thompson-Nicola, North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, Okanagan Similkameen regional districts and the western portions of both the Kootenay Boundary Regional District (represented by the Boundary sub-region) and the Columbia Shuswap Regional District (Shuswap Lake and area).

The Thompson Okanagan is the traditional territory of the Okanagan people (Syilx), part of the Interior Salish ethnographic group.

The KVR and its associated branch lines are located entirely within the Thompson Okanagan, with the exception of the Coquihalla Subdivision between Brodie and Hope, the part of the trail that drops from the Coquihalla Summit and follows the Coquihalla River into Hope. At the eastern terminus of Midway, the Trans Canada Trail follows the Columbia & Western Railway line east to Christina Lake and beyond to Castlegar.

### TRAIL HISTORY

The KVR, a subsidiary of the Canadian Pacific Railway since 1931, opened in 1915 and was abandoned in portions beginning in 1961, with the final segment falling into disuse in 1989. The core portion of the KVR started in Hope and terminated in Midway. Over time branch lines connected to Spences Bridge (via Merritt), Copper Mountain and Osoyoos. The CWR from Midway east to Castlegar was also sometimes referred to as the KVR.

The majority of the KVR's and CWR's original routes have been converted to a multiple-use recreation trail, which comprise a good portion of the BC section of the TCT. The TCT was designated in 1992 and the Trans Canada Trail Foundation established the same year. Provincial organizations started to explore routing of the TCT soon after but very little of the trail was formally established before 1996.

*Figure 4 TOTA Service Area*



## TRAIL DESCRIPTION<sup>4</sup>

A map of the KVR and its associated rail trail sections is shown in Figure 4. The Kettle Valley Railway section of the Trans Canada Trail extends roughly 482 km from Hope to Midway. When connecting sub-division rail trails are included, the trail length extends well beyond 824 km.

**Hope to Brookmere** - The Coquihalla subdivision between Hope and Brookmere takes about two days to complete on a bike, with few services en route, although there are numerous access points along Highway 5. The route uses pieces of the old railway, but much of it has been abandoned or built over by the highway and the Trans Mountain Pipeline. Noted features include the outstanding Othello or Quintette Tunnels just outside of Hope, the 5-km section through Jessica and the 24-km Coquihalla Summit, following the Coquihalla River. Between Coquihalla River and Brookmere the trail mostly follows the Coldwater River. The Summit offers waterfall sprays, great views, a tunnel, former rail snow sheds and interesting remnants of railway structures. Also of interest is the use of Shakespeare character names for the stations.

### Brookmere to Spences

**Bridge** - The KVR through the Merritt sub-division, which is not part of the TCT, was built as a branch connector to the CPR mainline via the Nicola, Kamloops and Similkameen Railway through to Spences Bridge (i.e. the Nicola sub-division), bypassing the frequently closed Coquihalla route. Cycling and hiking traffic on the Brookmere to Merritt trails is light because of the

<b>Sub-division</b>	<b>Distance (kilometres)</b>	<b>Elevation (metres)</b>	
		<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
Hope-Brookmere	91.1	5	1104
Brookmere-Merritt	47.3	598	962
Nicola-Spences Bridge	75.5	234	598
Brookmere-Penticton	174.9	345	1098
Penticton-Osoyoos	58.1	280	345
Penticton-Midway	215.0	345	1260
Midway-Castlegar	162.3	439	1291

Source: Langford (2015), Obee (2008), Google Earth

remoteness and distance from services. Beyond Kingsvale, the trail crosses private property and gates and fences may be an issue. Gold Country Communities Society has developed geocaching opportunities along the route. The trail ends at Merritt Station, where it joins the Nicola to Spences Bridge line. This is a popular cycling and hiking trail, passes through ranch lands, forests, and rocky terrain. However, much of the rail bed has reverted to landowners and First Nations and access is limited in many sections. (Gold Country Communities Society 2012)

<sup>4</sup> The majority of this section has been excerpted and condensed from Trails BC (2015), except for the Merritt and Osoyoos descriptions, which are cited separately.

**Brookmere to Penticton** - The TCT between Brookmere and Osprey Lake is entirely on the KVR. Major communities include Tulameen, Coalmont, Princeton and Osprey Lake. The scenery changes dramatically from coastal alpine to the drier parkland associated with the Interior Douglas Fir biogeoclimatic zone. Motorized use is said to be extensive in this section and trail conditions challenging for cyclists.

The TCT between Osprey Lake and Summerland is almost entirely on the KVR. Trail conditions are generally better than the Princeton area due to less concentrated motorized traffic, however, the trail can be particularly bad in the Demuth-Kirton area west of Faulder. The KVR is still an active railway west of Summerland and the trail ends in Summerland itself. Highlights include orchards, vineyards and the Trout Creek bridge. The trail from Trout Creek south to Penticton is technically a gap in the TCT as the KVR land is being transferred to the Penticton Indian Band. Future access is uncertain and the trail surface is likely to become more and more deteriorated as no maintenance is being performed during the land transfer process.

**Penticton to Osoyoos** – The KVR between Penticton and Osoyoos is known as the Osoyoos subdivision. It follows the edge of Skaha Lake to Okanagan Falls, a section that receives significant traffic (Critchley 2015), and then onto Osoyoos, where traffic drops off. Notable points of interest include wineries and orchards, sandy beaches, warm lakes, fruit stands, the bird and wildlife sanctuary of Vaseux Lake, and south of Oliver, Canada's only true desert. Settlement activity is extensive along the right-of-way and the trail can be challenging to follow with some detouring onto the highway required.

**Penticton to Midway** - The TCT within Penticton makes its way along the shore of Okanagan Lake before continuing north along the KVR through Naramata and up to Chute Lake. This is a very popular stretch of trail with high use levels, and views improve as one heads uphill. Trail Conditions are good between Penticton and Naramata. Highlights include Little Tunnel, Rock Ovens Regional Park, Adra Tunnel (closed but under restoration) and Chute Lake Resort. A new trail management plan for the Naramata-Chute Lake section of the KVR is in development which would separate motorized and non-motorized users along portions of the trail, while providing parking and staging facilities for motorized users.

The trail from Chute Lake Resort to McCullough is traversable, although the portion between Chute Lake and Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park has been converted to roadways. The major highlight of the area is Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park, with its extensive trestles and tunnels—the area is also a National Historic Site. Trail use in this area is likely the highest along the TCT. About 1.5 km east of Hydraulic Lake, the trail descends another 20 metres to Summit Lake, before entering the Boundary region - and continuing downhill to the communities of Carmi and Beaverdell.

Between McCulloch and Beaverdell the trail is fairly quiet, though some sections have become challenging due to motorized use. Views of the West Kettle River are exceptional and a point of interest is the Cyclist's Rest at Rhone. The trail continues south and then east to Midway along a combination of paved roads, gravel roads, gravel trail and dirt tracks. There is extensive areas of quiet pastureland. The Rock Creek/Westbridge fire in 2015 presents an opportunity for interpretation of fire-

affected landscapes. Midway is the eastern terminus of the KVR and the western terminus of the CWR. This section of rail trail sees much less traffic but trail surfaces are in good condition. There are also many sections of rail trail that are gated to deter motorized access.

**Midway to Castlegar** - From Midway to Eholt the CWR has reasonably good surface conditions with sand and loose rock. There are exceptional pastoral, cultural and historical interpretive values linked to industrial activities and Japanese internment during WW II. The north-facing forested area can be a dark but after passing through the tunnel, views of the Granby River Valley are exceptional. The trail then continues on to Grand Forks, and follows the Kettle River before climbing the shoulder of Castle Mountain and taking in the views of Christina Lake at the old railway station of Fife. Trail highlights include Hell's Bells in Greenwood, Downtown Greenwood, the Tunnel of Flags, the Trans Canada Trail Pavilion at Grand Forks, the trestle over the Kettle River between Grand Forks and Christina Lake and the connection to the Dewdney Trail and Cascade Highway.

The Trans Canada enters the West Kootenays near Farron Station and continues on to Castlegar. This is possibly the most remote part of the KVR/C&W rail trail and the surface varies from hard packed to loose gravel. The trail ends at Hugh Keenleyside Dam. Highlights include the region's rich history, such as the targeted bombing of Doukhobor leader Peter Verigin in 1924, the 1-km long Bulldog Tunnel, views of Lower Arrow Lake and the old rails preserved and still intact near Castlegar.

## USE LEVELS

There has been no formal counting of trail use for the TCT-KVR, except for the Myra Canyon section at Myra and at Ruth. Table 5 provides the actual count numbers at Myra from the Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society (MCTRS) counters.

**Table 3 MCTRS Monthly Total Counter Data at Myra**

Month	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
January		304	394	297	240	209
February		478	432	424	276	487
March		456	988	376	397	876
April		1328	2273	1074	1689	1289
May		7171	6764	4850	5930	5196
June	14771	7398	8937	10048	6228	7729
July	21158	13775	13468	22827	17625	15449
August	23480	16688	14804	20593	18874	22488
September	14759	11079	10695	10865	13496	12179*
October	8337	4806	6862	5908	5305	6244*
November	1193	1277	1124	641	420	
December	142	380	359	389	243	
<b>Total</b>	<b>83840</b>	<b>65140</b>	<b>67100</b>	<b>78292</b>	<b>70723</b>	<b>72146</b>

Source: Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society (2014)

Notes: \* Estimates as counter down for several days in each month

The counters are not able to count people walking side by side (a common activity), or a bicycle traveling at speed (another common activity), adding to the conservative nature of the annual count.

Table 6 provides MCTRS's visitor calculations based on the assumption that every person who uses the KVR either doubles back and therefore is counted as one visitor and not two visitors, or is counted on the way out of the Myra Canyon at the south end and thus subtracted from the total. Volunteers working on the trail estimate that 50% of all trail users are from outside the Central Okanagan.

**Table 4 Total Visitors entering at Myra and at Ruth<sup>5</sup>**

MCTRS Counters	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Myra</b>	41920	32570	33550	39146	35362	36073
<b>Ruth</b>	9222	7165	7381	8612	7779	2886
<b>Total</b>	<b>51142</b>	<b>39735</b>	<b>40931</b>	<b>47758</b>	<b>43141</b>	<b>38959</b>

Source: Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society (2014)

## OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

### Provincial Context

In BC, what is commonly referred to as recreation sites and trails are public campgrounds and trails located on Crown land outside of parks and settled areas. They provide recreation experiences within an integrated resource management setting where the land base is managed for a variety of land uses, whether for resource extraction, recreation, fish and wildlife management, watershed protection, and the like. Recreation sites and trails are the responsibility of RSTBC of the Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

RSTBC is working on a variety of important initiatives and policies to ensure the effective management, safety and enjoyment of BC's extensive recreation resources. Major initiatives include:

- **Mountain Bike Policy** - developed in 2006, the policy recognizes mountain biking as a legitimate and important recreation activity on Crown land, and supports a partnership approach to managing and administering mountain bike trails between the Province and user groups.
- **Trails Strategy for British Columbia** - FLNRO, in collaboration with BC Parks and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, produced a provincial trails strategy in 2008. It describes an action plan for developing and managing a sustainable, world-class network of recreation trails across the province. The Strategy is linked to several higher-level provincial initiatives, including The BC Jobs Plan, Gaining the Edge: A Five-Year Strategy for Tourism in British Columbia and Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy for British Columbia.
- **Spirit of 2010 Trail** - The Spirit of 2010 Trail was a provincial-federal partnership that provided funds to upgrade a network of five abandoned rail corridors linking 18

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<sup>5</sup> The counter at the Ruth end only gives total counts and must be read manually. This is done every two weeks or so. Typically about 20 to 25% of the visitors enter at the Ruth end.

communities: the Kettle Valley Rail Trail, Columbia and Western Rail Trail, Slocan Rail Trail, Cowichan Rail Trail and the Great Northern Rail Trail. The Spirit of 2010 Trail policy says the rail corridors can provide a “unique recreational experience” and defines the “primary activities” as cycling, walking, hiking, horseback riding and cross-country skiing.

RSTBC has also acknowledged, however, that motorized use of the TCT-KVR trail is a fact of life and has been so for many years. In August, 2014, a letter to Trails BC by the assistant deputy minister of FLNRO stated that “Despite significant capital investment from the Province, federal government, Trans Canada Trail and dedicated stewardship groups, it has been very difficult to achieve the vision for a world-class network of primarily non-motorized rail trails. Limited operational resources combined with the length and remoteness of the trails, extensive infrastructure maintenance, ongoing use conflicts, and varying community support have presented many complex challenges.” (Pynn 2014) To manage this new reality, the province has an internal policy (Revised Strategic Approach to Rail Trails) that acknowledges motorized use on the TCT-KVR.

Legislative authority for managing recreation sites and trails is set out in the FRPA and the Forest Recreation Regulation. Maintaining or developing recreation sites and trails on Crown land requires authorization by RSTBC through provisions in FRPA. Maintenance activities are designed to ensure user safety, provide sanitary conditions, protect the environment, ensure access and convenience, and maintain facilities and infrastructure. (RSTBC 2015) In terms of commercial activity on Crown land, including trails, the Province, under authority of the Land Act, issues tenures such as leases and licences of occupation. The Adventure Tourism Policy defines how tenures are issued, the activities approved under licence and the obligations of the licensee to maintain management plans and report usage. By law, commercial tenures do not prohibit or otherwise restrict public use and enjoyment of the tenure area.

Trail development and management is also supported through the Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) process. Higher level plans that set out management direction and policies for the majority of the TCT-KVR in the Thompson Okanagan include the Okanagan-Shuswap LRMP and the Kootenay Boundary Regional Land Use Plan.

### **Local Government**

In its Regional Trails Master Plan the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) defined the future direction, policies, priorities, standards and strategies for the existing and future potential linear parks and trails and support for a regional trail network (Cascade Environmental 2012). Among key action items was the limiting of motorized use along the KVR within populated areas and policies supporting the KVR as a recreation and transportation corridor. The Rails to Trails & Parks Committee have a mandate to secure tenure on portions of the KVR within the boundaries of the RDOS and to develop a linear park strategy that links communities, parks, schools and shopping areas. The *Click, Hike & Bike* application on the RDOS website includes maps and trail information that allows users to interactively access aerial photos, trail descriptions and access points (RDOS 2015).

The Central Okanagan Trails Alliance, representing 12 outdoor recreation groups in the Kelowna area, has a mission to improve the Central Okanagan trail networks for the benefit of residents and visitors. It has recently released a *Master Trails Plan* identifying the lack of coordination among trail users and the funding/maintenance of trails as fundamental challenges for the region (Central Okanagan Trails Alliance 2015). It strongly advocates a leadership role by Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) in trail development and more integrated marketing of the Kelowna area as a bicycle tourism destination. RDCO has identified regional trails and greenways in its Regional Parks Plan, including the establishment of a regional trail system (RDCO 2000).

RDCO, in partnerships with its member municipalities and electoral areas, produced the *Regional Active Transportation Master Plan* in 2012 that reinforced the contribution the regional rail to trails network makes to sustainable transportation options for residents and visitors (RDCO 2012). It is noted that the planning focus is placed on 'quick wins', corridors which require little improvement or those that may be placed at higher priority within local plans.

The City of Kelowna is pursuing its Rails with Trails Pathway on the abandoned Kelowna Pacific Railway right-of-way between Vernon and downtown Kelowna. It reinforces objectives previously identified in the Official Community Plan (*Kelowna 2030: Greening our Future*) and the *Kelowna & Area Mountain Biking Strategy*. The City has completed the first two phases of paving from Gordon to Spall drives, which will ultimately extend to the UBC Okanagan Campus, the Kelowna International Airport and points north.

The City has also completed a way-finding strategy and has begun installation of structures on a loop route within the city. This initiative forms the basis for the nearly completed Regional Way-finding strategy developed on behalf of partners, Peachland, West Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, Lake Country and RDCO. Next steps for both strategies includes formalizing them into development servicing bylaws, local ped and bike plans and planning and operations processes within each organization. These steps are to ensure sustainability and growth of the program in the region (Kittmer 2015, pers. comm.).

There is also a rapidly expanding effort on a Trail of the Okanagans that would ultimately link Sicamous to Osoyoos. While this initiative is not specific to the TCT-KVR, it is worth noting that the tourism and economic development potential of an approximate 1,000+ km rail trail system transecting the Okanagan Shuswap and further linking to the Lower Mainland and southern Kootenays would be a truly world class recreational and visitor experience.

In the Boundary region, the Kootenay Boundary Regional District (KBRD) has been active in economic development under guidance of the Boundary Economic Development Committee (BEDC). BEDC has been supportive of numerous tourism and cultural initiatives including the Branding the Boundary ([boundarybc.com](http://boundarybc.com)), regional tourism action plan (which prioritizes TCT development and the completion of a trail inventory), signage and way finding for visitors, and a heritage restoration and revitalization program.



The Brookmere to Merritt and Spences Bridge segments of the KVR are in the Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD). Merritt is the only municipality along this route, much of which has been at least partially lost. There is no current or planned development of these trails by Merritt or the TNRD and provincial jurisdiction, as previously noted, does not reside with RSTBC.

In summary, the concept and vision for adding to and improving the TCT-KVR, as a transportation, recreation and tourism corridor is widely supported by local government planning and where appropriate is being linked to higher level plans of the provincial government.

### **The Trans Canada Trail**

The TCT, founded in 1992, will eventually comprise 500 individual trails linking every province and territory and hundreds of communities from the Pacific to the Arctic and Atlantic oceans. In BC the TCT extends from the southern tip of Vancouver Island to the B.C./Alberta border. It includes four of the Spirit of 2010 Trails as well as community and regional trails, BC Parks trails, community pathways and forest roads. The TCT represents a collaborative effort between the regional, provincial and federal governments, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation, community group support, and the Trails Society of British Columbia (Trails BC).

In BC, the trail is primarily Crown land, with component sections owned by different agencies, including the TFA, DBC, FLNRO and Ministry of Environment (MOE). RSTBC plays a role in managing public recreation on those portions of the Trail under the jurisdiction of FLNRO.

Table 7 shows the owner and management status along the length of the TCT-KVR. The majority of the right-of-way is provincial Crown land managed either by FLNRO, BC Parks, MOTI or the BCTFA. The designated legislation is Section 56 of FRPA, in the case of FLNRO, and a provincial park under the BC Parks Act where BC Parks is the authority. The portion of the TCT-KVR within Myra-Bellevue Provincial Park is subject to the Management Direction Statement, which underscores the recreation and tourism values of the KVR (BC Parks 2005). For many stretches through the Thompson Okanagan, FLNRO has negotiated partnership agreements with RDOS either through Section 118 of FRPA or via a Licence of Occupation (LOO) through the Land Act. Two municipalities, Grand Forks and Penticton, own the trail outright within their boundaries, while another, Princeton, holds a LOO from the Province. Other than some scattered pieces of private property between Beaverdell and Rock Creek, the only part of the original right-of-way with an uncertain future is that which passes through Penticton Indian Band (PIB) reserve adjacent to Penticton. Currently, this stretch is in the process of being returned to the PIB and is neither maintained nor patrolled. The official TCT is adjacent to Highway 97 in this area.

**Table 5 TCT-KVR Ownership Status**

Section	Ownership	Agency	Designation	Notes
Castlegar to Gilpin Grasslands Park	Crown	FLNRO	FRPA 56 Trail	
Gilpin Grasslands Parks	Crown	BC Parks	Provincial Park	
Gilpin Grassland Parks to Grand Forks	Crown	FLNRO	FRPA 56 Trail	
City of Grand Forks	Municipality	Municipality	Municipal Trail	
Grand Forks to Myra Bellevue Park	Crown	FLNRO	FRPA 56 Trail	Some private property (Beaverdell-Rock Creek)
Myra Bellevue Park	Crown	BC Parks	Provincial Park	
Myra Bellevue Park to Penticton	Crown	FLNRO RDOS	FRPA 56 Trail FRPA 118 Partnership Agreement	
Penticton	Municipality	Municipality	Municipal Trail	
Penticton to Kaleden	Crown	FLNRO	none	Subject of addition to reserve negotiations with PIB
Kaleden to OK Falls	Crown	FLNRO RDOS	none Land Act LOO	
OK Falls to Osoyoos	Crown	FLNRO RDOS	None Application for Land Act LOO	
Penticton to Summerland	Crown	MOTI		Trail adjacent to Hwy 97
Penticton to Summerland (original right-of-way)	CP Rail	CP Rail	none	Subject of transfer negotiations with PIB
Summerland	Municipality	Municipality	Municipal Park	4k section in Conkle Mountain Park, some trail on urban roads
Summerland to Osprey Lake	Crown	FLNRO RDOS	FRPA 56 Trail FRPA 118 Partnership Agreement	
Osprey Lake to Princeton	Crown	FLNRO RDOS	FRPA 56 Trail Land Act LOO	
Princeton	Crown	FLNRO Municipality	FRPA 56 Trail Land Act LOO	
Princeton to Brookmere	Crown	FLNRO RDOS	FRPA 56 Trail Land Act LOO	
Brookmere to Spences Bridge	Crown	MOTI/TFA	none	
Brookmere to Hope	Crown	MOTI/TFA	none	Some sections managed by Spectra Energy

Notes: FLNRO Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, FRPA Forests and Range Practices Act, LOO Licence of Occupation, MOTI Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, PIB Penticton Indian Band, RDOS Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, TFA Transportation Finance Authority.

## FIRST NATIONS

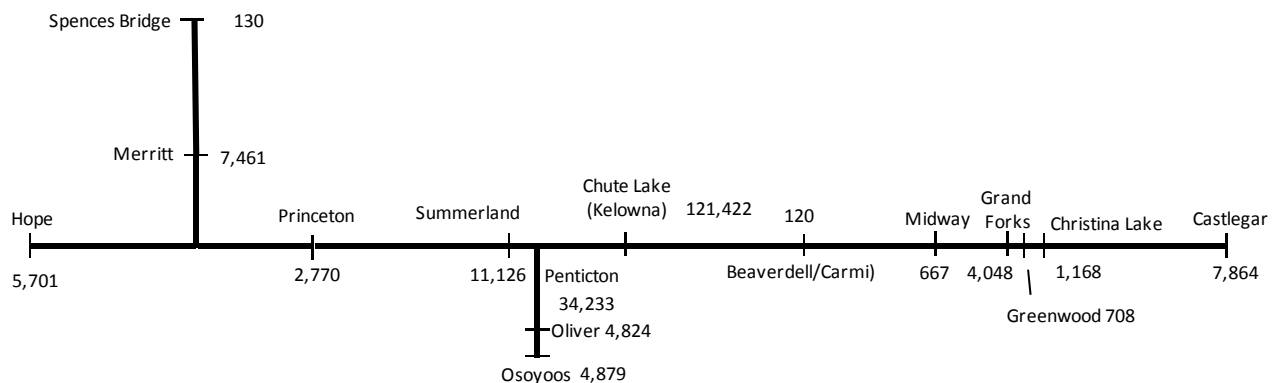
Appendix C shows Indian Reserves adjacent to the TCT-KVR. The original right-of-way between Penticton and Summerland is currently subject to return to reserve or private property negotiations with the Penticton Indian Band. RSTBC is advising against public and visitor use, while Trails BC has noted that once the transfer is complete, agreements will be needed to permit future public use of the trail. Currently Highway 97 is the alternate but the Ministry of Transportation does not endorse this route. In other areas, the trail is adjacent to Osoyoos Indian Band reserves between Oliver and Osoyoos and several Merritt area reserves between Merritt and Spences Bridge.

The trail passes through First Nations traditional territories including, in the Merritt area, Lower Nicola, Schakan, Cook’s Ferry, Nooaitch and Coldwater, in the Similkameen, Upper Similkameen and Lower Similkameen, and in the Okanagan, Osoyoos, Penticton and Westbank. Of these, only Westbank is engaged in the treaty process.

## COMMUNITIES AND SERVICES

The major communities associated with the trail, from east to west, are Christina Lake, Greenwood, Grand Forks, Midway, Rock Creek, Beaverdell/Carmi, Kelowna, Naramata, Penticton, Oliver, Osoyoos, Summerland, Princeton and Merritt. Community population estimates for 2014 appear in Figure 5. Total regional population is approximately 277,000 with two-thirds of this clustered in the Kelowna area and another quarter in the south Okanagan (BC Stats 2015). The western and eastern flanks of the KVR are sparsely populated.

**Figure 5 Community and Region Population Along the TCT-KVR, 2014**



Source: BC Stats (2015)

Similar to the distribution of population, the availability of infrastructure and services that cater to visitors and trail users is highly concentrated in the Okanagan sub-region and diminishes in the Similkameen and Boundary sub-regions.

Table 8 shows the number of locations in five industries that provide visitor services in the Thompson Okanagan. Accommodation services, food and beverage services, performing arts, heritage facilities and amusement, gambling and recreational industries are listed. A total of 803 establishments are

allocated to four sub-regions, Boundary, Okanagan, Similkameen and Nicola, with accommodation and food and beverage accounting for the large majority. In terms of spatial distribution, 69% of all establishments are clustered in the south Okanagan, 12% in the Boundary and 8% in the Similkameen and the remaining 12% in the Nicola. It is noted that each of these industries caters to residents as well as visitors and there are other industries not listed, such as gas stations, gift and retail stores and transportation services not listed that cater to visitors. A scan of service directories from DMO websites in the Boundary, Okanagan, Similkameen and Nicola indicate that the total number of service establishments is considerably higher, but quantification is difficult due to definitional issues.

A spatial depiction of how key different services and infrastructure are distributed along the trail is provided in Appendix C. The indicators mapped include Visitor Centres (VCs), accommodation, forest recreation sites, trail heads and trails, parks and protected areas, and major attractions (golf courses, activities, festivals/events). Services are congregated in the populous areas of the Okanagan but even then there are trail segments that are not proximal to service corridors, with the exception of the Osoyoos sub-division between Penticton and Osoyoos.

Whereas services tend to be clustered in the Okanagan, forest and recreation sites and other trail networks proliferate in the remote areas. The number of recreation sites near the trail is much higher in the western sections (Similkameen and Coquihalla) than in the Okanagan or Boundary. There are several locations, notably Coquihalla, Brookmere and especially McCulloch, where there is numerous direct connections between the TCT-KVR and local trail networks.

Cell coverage is an important service where there is an expectation by visitors that mobile devices can be used as part of their experience. Appendix C shows network coverage along and adjacent to the trail. Service is widely available in major communities and coverage is widespread in the south Okanagan, but at least half of the route has no service at all.

## **TOURISM BUSINESSES**

The large majority of trail use on the KVR is self-guided although the lack of traffic data does not allow the proportion to be quantified. The survey conducted as part of the research phase of this project identified 22 businesses that conducted guided tours of the TCT-KVR and another 10 that provided trail-related services to trail users. Google searches and scans of business directories on community DMO websites indicated a similar quantum. Most guiding services and major events are organized by a handful of major operators in the Okanagan and Boundary regions, however, there are also several outbound tour operators marketing kettle valley railway tours.

**Table 6 Number of Business Establishments in TOTA Sub-regions**

Industry	Boundary		Okanagan		Similkameen		Nicola		Region Total
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	
<b>711 - Performing arts, spectator sports and related industries</b>	5	7%	60	79%	2	3%	9	12%	76
<b>712 - Heritage institutions</b>	4	21%	8	42%	4	21%	3	16%	19
<b>713 - Amusement, gambling and recreation industries</b>	11	12%	72	76%	5	5%	7	7%	95
<b>721 - Accommodation services</b>	31	11%	182	66%	25	9%	38	14%	276
<b>722 - Food services and drinking places</b>	43	13%	230	68%	28	8%	36	11%	337
<b>Total</b>	94	12%	552	69%	64	8%	93	12%	803

Source: Statistics Canada (2015)

Notes: Boundary = Greenwood, Grand Forks, Midway, Kootenay Boundary Areas B, C and D  
 Okanagan = Osoyoos, Oliver, Penticton, Summerland, Okanagan-Similkameen Areas A, C, D and F, Indian Reserve Penticton 1  
 Similkameen = Keremeos, Princeton, Okanagan-Similkameen Areas B, G and H  
 Nicola = Merritt, Thompson-Nicola Areas I and N

## VISITOR INFORMATION AND SIGNAGE

Potential visitors to the Thompson Okanagan can obtain information on the TCT-KVR in digital and hardcopy format from a variety of sources, such as the provincial government, local government, visitor centres, trail organizations, stewardship and community groups, tour operators and individual businesses.

Government and non-government organizations that have mandates for trail development, promotion and use, and which provide online trail resources, include the following:

- [Recreation Sites and Trails BC](#)
- [Trans Canada Trail Foundation](#)
- [Trails BC](#)
- Dan and Sandra Langford, [Cycling the Kettle Valley Railway](#)
- Cycling BC, [BC's Trans Canada Trail](#)
- British Columbia Trails & British Columbia Trail Maps, <https://www.trails.com/findarea.aspx?state=BC>
- Trail Peak, <http://www.trailpeak.com/>
- Regional District Okanagan Similkameen, [Click Hike & Bike](#)

Each website provides a different set of resources, including mapping information, that may or may not be up to date. Each features a different brand or set of brands.

The RSTBC promotes the TCT-KVR as part of the Spirit of 2010 initiative, an additional brand that does not appear to be used by local visitor service organizations in the Thompson Okanagan. The TCT website allows download of trail shape files that can be used for personalized mapping and GIS.

The RDOS Click Hike & Bike is the most comprehensive of any of these sites. It features KVR branch lines that are not part of the TCT and of course many other trails that are not part of the rail trail system. Click Hike & Bike uses the Geocortex Viewer for Silverlight employed by Imap BC and many local governments around the province, including RDKB and TNRD.

Major traveller information websites like [www.britishcolumbia.com](http://www.britishcolumbia.com) and [HelloBC](#) do not feature the TCT-KVR as a single trail experience and do not provide map or trail-specific information. A search for TCT-KVR will provide links to local VCs and community web pages.

An overview of local sources of trail information is presented in Table 9. The TCT-KVR term is being used in almost of these materials, although the exact terminology can vary; for example KVR is referred to as railroad trail, rail trail and in one case just trail with no reference to rail. Full trail descriptions are in short supply so further resources would be needed by self-guided trail users. In the case of the RDOS, the on-line version of the publication contains significantly more data than the print version.

**Table 7 TCT-KVR Visitor Information**

Document Title	Published by	Website	Dimensions	Cover Brands	Refers to:			Trail Descrip.
					KVR	TCT	Map	
<b>Trans Canada Trail British Columbia Official Guide of the Trans Canada Trail</b>	Whitecap Books	none	5 ¼ x 8 ½ softcover book	Trans Canada Trail	yes	yes	yes	detailed
<b>The Kettle Valley Express Adventure Travel Guide to South Central BC</b>	Vicom Design Inc.	<a href="http://www.kettlevalleyexpress.com">http://www.kettlevalleyexpress.com</a>	pages 49 four colour 8 1/2 x 11 staple bound	Kettle Valley Express	yes	yes	yes	partial
<b>Boundary Trails guide &amp; maps</b>	Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce	<a href="http://www.boundarychamber.com/">http://www.boundarychamber.com/</a>	n/a (digital)	none	yes	yes	yes	yes distance
<b>Boundary Vacation Guide 2015</b>	Black Press	<a href="http://www.boundarybc.com">http://www.boundarybc.com</a> Official brand and website for Boundary country.	pages 63 four colour 8 1/4 x 9 3/4 staple bound	none	yes Kettle Valley Railroad Trail	yes	yes	no
<b>Grand Forks Valley Walkabout</b>	Grand Forks Community Trails Society	<a href="http://www.gftrails.ca/Walkabout.html">http://www.gftrails.ca/Walkabout.html</a>	n/a (digital)	none	No Refers to CPR	yes	yes	yes
<b>Christina Lake Trails Map and Guide</b>	Christina Lake Explore the Outdoors	<a href="http://www.christinalake.com/">http://www.christinalake.com/</a>	18 x 24 four colour folded map	Christina Lake Explore the Outdoors	yes	yes	yes	yes distance, ascent/de scent, difficulty
<b>Welcome to the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen</b>	RDOS	<a href="http://www.rdos.bc.ca/departments/community-services/regional-trails/">http://www.rdos.bc.ca/departments/community-services/regional-trails/</a>	10 x 20 four colour folded map	RDOS Click Hike and Bike	yes Kettle Valley Rail Trail	no	yes	partial focus on access and highlights

Thompson Okanagan Regional Rail Trails Tourism Strategy

Document Title	Published by	Website	Dimensions	Cover Brands	Refers to:			Trail Descrip.
					KVR	TCT	Map	
<b>No Title</b>	Penticton and Wine Country Chamber of Commerce	<a href="http://www.penticton.org/">http://www.penticton.org/</a>	n/a (digital)	Penticton and Wine Country Time to breathe	yes	no	yes	no
<b>Penticton</b>	Town Directory Publications	<a href="http://issuu.com/towndirectory/docs/2015_penticton_map_book">http://issuu.com/towndirectory/docs/2015_penticton_map_book</a>	n/a (digital)	none	yes KVR centenary	yes	yes	no
<b>Summerland Hiking &amp; Biking Trails</b>	Summerland Chamber of Commerce	<a href="http://www.tourismsummerland.com">www.tourismsummerland.com</a>	11 x 17 four colour folded map	Summerland Summerland Chamber of Commerce	yes Kettle Valley Trail	yes	yes	partial
<b>Summerland Map</b>	Town Directory Publications	<a href="http://issuu.com/towndirectory/docs/2015_summerland_map">http://issuu.com/towndirectory/docs/2015_summerland_map</a>	16 x 17 1/2 four colour folded map	none	yes KVR centenary	yes	yes	no
<b>Similkameen Valley Maps</b>	Town Directory Publications	<a href="http://issuu.com/towndirectory/docs/similkameen_valley_map_2014">http://issuu.com/towndirectory/docs/similkameen_valley_map_2014</a>	16 x 17 1/2 four colour folded map	none	yes	yes	yes	no
<b>Trans-Canada Trail Explorer: Myra Station to Penticton</b>	Virtual Outdoor Adventures	<a href="http://www.virtualoutdooradventures.com/guidebook-products.html#TCT">http://www.virtualoutdooradventures.com/guidebook-products.html#TCT</a>	DVD	none	yes	yes	yes	yes



## THOMPSON OKANAGAN VISITOR ACTIVITY

As seen in Table 10, in 2012, the majority of overnight travellers to the Thompson Okanagan were BC residents (70%), followed by Canadians from the rest of Canada (17%), US travellers (6%) and other international travellers at 7%. In terms of spending, the proportions are somewhat different with BC residents spending less on average than other Canadians, US and international travellers. American travellers had the highest daily expenditure, but their trip length was considerably shorter than other Canadians and international travellers. Together, BC and Alberta residents account for 83% of all visitors to the Thompson Okanagan and 72% of total spending.

**Table 8 Thompson Okanagan Visitor Volumes and Spending, 2012**

	Total			% Change (2011-2012)			Share of Total		
	Over/N visitors (000s)	Spending (\$000s)	Nights (000s)	Over/N visitors	Spending	Nights	Over/N visitors	Spending	Nights
All travellers	3,827	\$1,140,998	13,598	0%	-8%	1%	100%	100%	100%
BC Residents	2,695	\$598,802	7,816	7%	-12%	10%	70%	52%	57%
Other Canadian Residents	639	\$325,384	3,304	-19%	-4%	-19%	17%	29%	24%
US residents	218	\$72,906	752	-7%	-9%	1%	6%	6%	6%
Other residents	276	\$143,907	1,726	-2%	2%	7%	7%	13%	13%

Source: Destination BC (2015)

Close to half of all visitors to the Thompson Okanagan stay with friends and family (Table 11). Interestingly, BC residents and other Canadians are less likely to stay with friends and relatives than either US or international visitors. For paid accommodation, US and international visitors prefer fixed-roof facilities, whereas BC and other Canadian visitors are much more likely to stay in campgrounds and RV parks.

**Table 9 Thompson Okanagan Region Visitors Accommodation Preferences, 2012**

Primary Accommodation	BC Residents	Other Canadians	US Residents	Other International
Friends and Family	47%	49%	51%	62%
Hotel	11%	18%	21%	26%
Motel	4%	6%	12%	2%
Other Commercial Fixed Roof	10%	8%	7%	1%
Camping/ RV Parks	16%	13%	7%	9%

Source: Destination BC (2015)

Note: The sum will not equal 100% as not all non-paid accommodation is included in the table.

Activities undertaken by visitors while they are in the Thompson Okanagan region in 2012 are shown in Table 12. BC residents and other Canadians tend to participate primarily in outdoor activities, while US residents and Other International visitors prefer a mix of cultural and outdoor activities.

International visitors, including those from the US, have a strong preference for national, provincial or nature parks. Cycling ranks 13<sup>th</sup> among BC Resident activities and 14<sup>th</sup> among Other Canadians.

**Table 10 Thompson Okanagan Region Visitors Activity Preferences, 2012**

	BC Residents	Other Canadians	US Residents	Other International
1	Beach	Beach	National, provincial or nature park	National, provincial or nature park
2	Hiking or backpacking	Hiking or backpacking	Historic site	Historic site
3	Camping	National, provincial or nature park	Museum or art gallery	Zoo or aquarium
4	National, provincial or nature park	Boating/ canoeing/ kayaking	Camping	Museum or art gallery
5	Boating/ canoeing/ kayaking	Wildlife viewing or bird watching	Boating	Boating
...	...	...	...	...
12	<b>Cycling</b>	Downhill skiing or snowboarding	Fishing	Fishing
13	Sports event as a spectator	<b>Cycling</b>	Theme or amusement park	Casino
14	n/a	n/a	<b>Sport/outdoor activity</b>	<b>Sport/outdoor activity</b>

Source: Destination BC (2015)

Note: n/a not available

## CYCLING TRENDS

There are many trends influencing cycling and trail usage in Canada, from increasing participation rates due to the benefits of an active outdoor lifestyle, to changing demographics and growing diversity of users. The growing economic benefits of cycling and trail use derive from its function as an activity or as a mode of transportation, both of which generate many associated health and environmental benefits, and its expanding role as a leisure and travel pursuit. Markets are expanding and prompting new and expanded trail/route networks, facility improvements and product development at all levels. Major trends driving change in this area include the following:

- Cycling tourism is an emerging global sector, with more organized product and tour offerings, event development and recognition as an adventure tourism option.
- The economic impacts of cycling tourism are being acknowledged by national and regional bodies and the research is leveraging investment into strategic assets that encourage local participation as well as enhanced travel activity. The European Union, United Kingdom, Scotland, the Netherlands, Denmark, New Zealand, Australia, numerous US states and Ontario

and Quebec have all conducted studies and developed investment and marketing strategies to expand their tourism sectors.

- Cycling networks continue to grow on a global basis. The Euro-Velo network has 14 major routes with 45,000 kms of in-place trail/pathway. The US Bicycle Route System features 6,800 miles in 15 states. Quebec's Route Verte is close to 5,000 kms and annually attracts approximately \$100 million annually in visitor spending. (Elkhashab 2014)
- Regional bike networks are being actively linked to scenic, cultural, and historic assets to enhance destination appeal.
- Short tours and stays in major centres are blossoming in the US. The Bicycle Tour Alliance has researched best practices for short stays and day trips.
- Guided group tours are popular among North American companies, but self-guided tours, a less expensive option often offered in Europe, is expected to grow in popularity. In these tours, the company arranges lodging, transportation and route guidance but the traveller ride the tour on their own. This makes bike touring more accessible and affordable to a larger market.
- In the US federal and state agencies are developing policy and program support for cycling travel. For example, the park systems of seven states have adopted a "no turn-away" directive for travelling cyclists, so self-guided cyclists always have a place to stay at state parks.
- Many communities are investing in "bike share" systems where cyclists have the ability to pick up and drop off at different stations.
- Large multi-day bike events are exploding in popularity in North America. The Grand Tour in Quebec and Ride the Rockies (Colorado), among many others, regularly attract hundreds of thousands of participants, and generate hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact and charitable contributions.
- Cycling related non-profits associated with bike tourism are experiencing growth in line with the overall expansion of cycling tourism. Velo Quebec (La Route Verte), the European Cyclists federation and the Adventure Cycling Association are expanding their memberships and knowledge bases which collectively contribute to the growth in cycling tourism. (Adventure Cycling Association 2015)

### **CYCLE TOURISM IN BC**

Destination BC consumer studies indicate that, on average, approximately 10% of Canadian travellers, 11% of US travellers and 18% of overseas travellers participate in cycling, biking, or bike touring while visiting BC (Skerbinek 2015, pers. comm.).

Destination BC has not profiled cycle tourists in BC since 2009 and even then the data was drawn from Statistics Canada's Travel Activities and Motivations Study (TAMS) for the 2004 and 2005 period.

Highlights from the profile of cycling and mountain biking pleasure travellers include the following:

## Thompson Okanagan Regional Rail Trails Tourism Strategy

- More likely to be male than female, although among Canadians participation is relatively balanced;
- Age profiles are diverse with heavy concentrations in the 18-34 and 45-54 age groups, and participation among those +65 is also significant;
- Mountain biking is more likely to attract the younger age groups;
- Majority of participants have household incomes above \$60,000 and have post-graduate education;
- Just under 1 million of the 5.6 million Canadian visitors to BC (17%) participated in a cycling activity, while 5%, or 270,00, indicated it was a primary overnight trip motivator.<sup>6</sup> Just under 1 million of the 7 million US visitors to BC (14%) participated in a cycling activity, while 5%, or 350,000, indicated it was a primary overnight trip motivator;
- BC is seen as an appealing cycling destination by North American visitors to this province;
- Canadian and US cycling travellers are more likely to travel in summer and winter than the average traveller;
- Cyclists tend to have high levels of participation in other outdoor activities, with the most popular crossover activities included hiking (52%), camping (44%) and fishing (43%). In terms of other outdoor and cultural activities, Canadian visitors enjoyed swimming in lakes, and sunbathing/sitting on a beach, while for US visitors, visiting national/provincial parks and strolling cities were most popular. (Tourism BC 2009)

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<sup>6</sup> The TAMS survey represented a two-year period.

## REGIONAL MARKETS

Traditionally, tourism markets have been looked at largely in terms of their demographic and geographic characteristics, and their activity participation. TOTA's decision to license the Canadian Tourism Commission's Explorer Quotient® (EQ) tool has allowed the region's stakeholders to understand the social and travel values that drive demand and the corresponding need to develop and position tourism product as "experiences" rather than commodities. The regional strategy identified three EQ [market segments](#) with a high propensity for travel that are particularly relevant to the Thompson Okanagan: **Free Spirits**, **Cultural Explorers**, and **Authentic Experiencers**.<sup>7</sup> The emphasis on understanding visitors from a values perspective and the CTC's corresponding focus on developing experiences is integrated with the Thompson Okanagan strategy.

Profiles of the BC and Alberta markets by EQ type and targets, bicycling participation rates and major city markets are presented in Figure 6 and Figure 7, respectively. Approximately two-thirds of BC residents, which represent approximately 70% of all visitors to the Thompson Okanagan, fall into four EQ types, Free Spirits, Authentic Experiencers, Rejuvenators and Cultural Explorers. When the 1,769,727 residents of the province who participate in bicycling are profiled separately, the distribution by EQ types is practically unchanged. Understandably, municipalities with high population levels represent key target areas.

The profile of Alberta households shares similarities with their BC counterparts, but there are also some notable differences. Two of the top four types in Alberta, Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits, also rank in the top four in BC, although their shares are smaller. In contrast, No Hassle Travellers and Gentle Explorers make up close to 40% of all Alberta households, whereas in BC these types when combined account for around 15% of households.

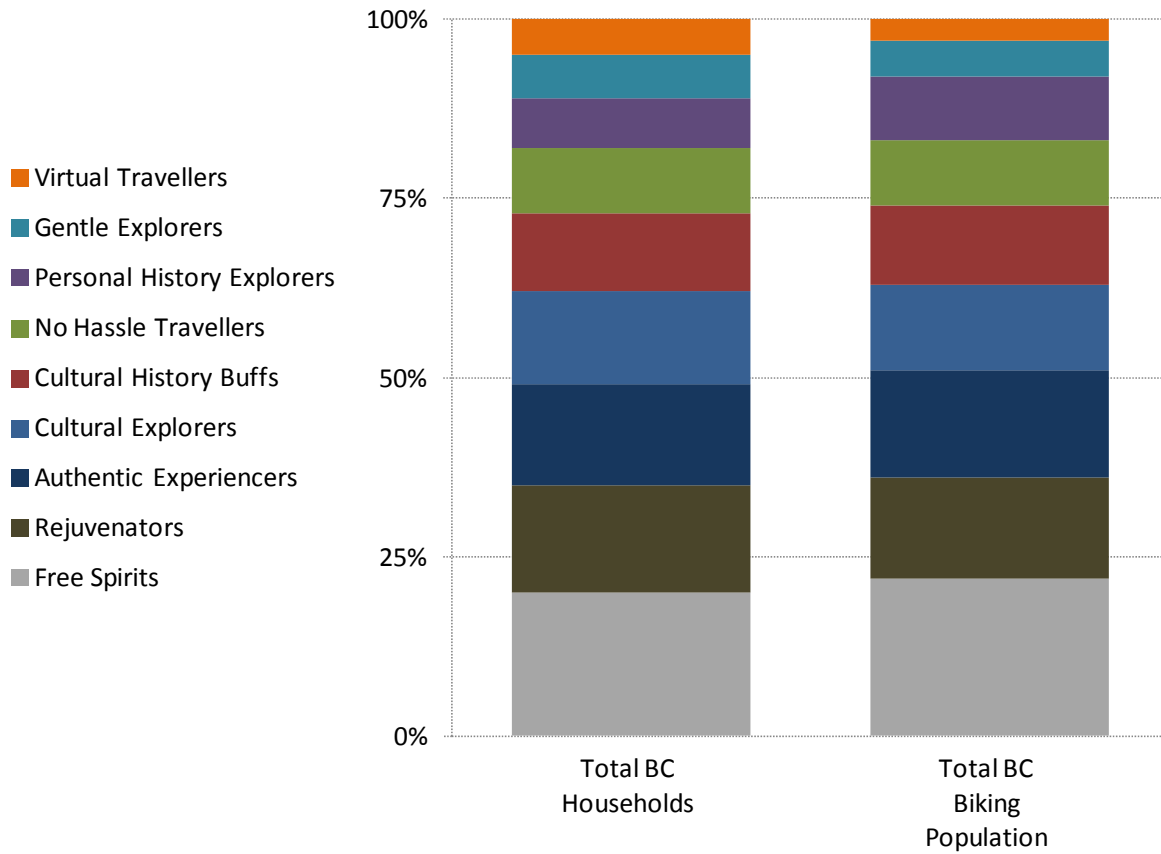
As in BC, when the 1.6 million number of cycling participants among Alberta residents are profiled, the distribution of EQ types is very similar to that of the overall population.

The evaluation of the EQ research indicates that in BC and Alberta, which collectively account for as much as 85% of all visitors in the Thompson Okanagan, the dominant psychographic types tend to be the same for the total population as they are for the bicycling population. This is a reflection of relatively high participation rates which attenuates differences in bicycling as a preferred activity among the different types. But there are also some clear differences between the two provinces in terms of dominant EQ types. This has obvious implications for marketing programs and how industry engages consumers in each province to build regional visitor use of the TCT-KVR.

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<sup>7</sup> Further details on the customer profiles – their social and travel values and what activities appeal to the different traveller types are included in Appendix B.

**Figure 6 BC Household EQ Types, Biking Participation and Major Geographic Markets**

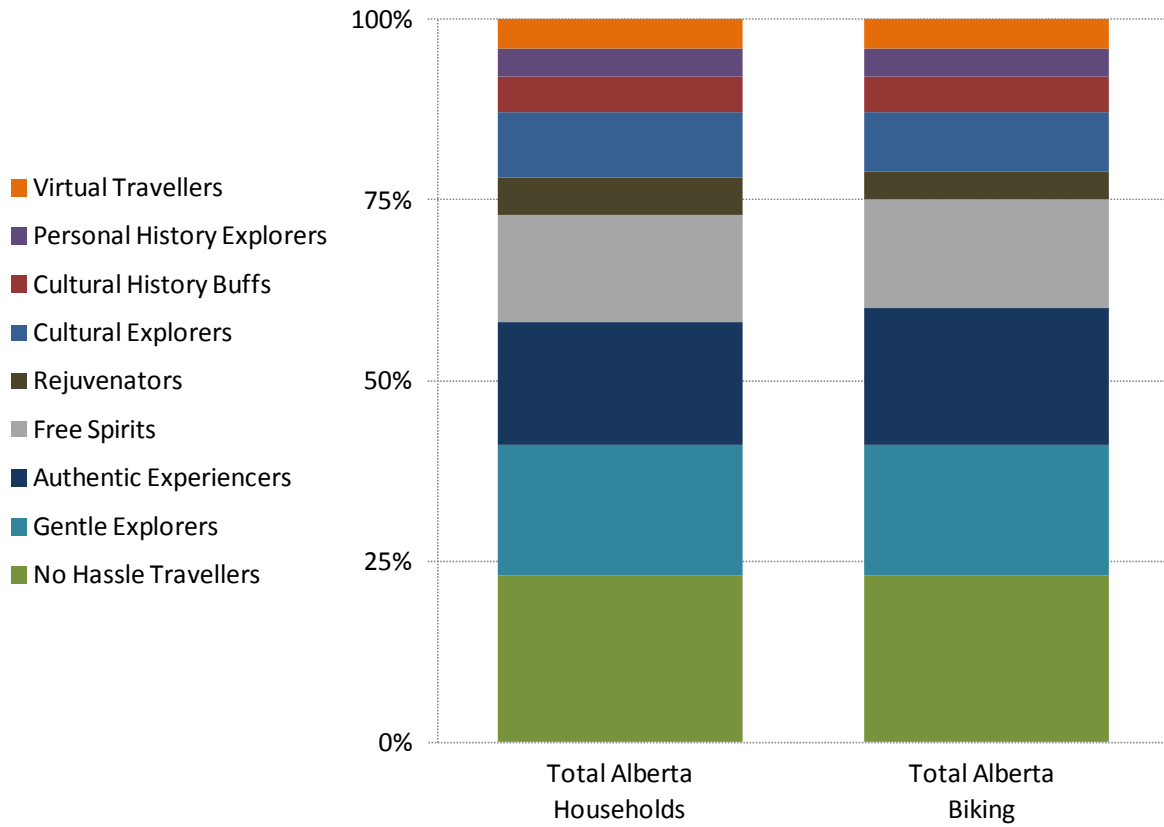


Biking Population+18	1,769,727
Major Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Richmond</li> <li>• Surrey</li> <li>• Vancouver</li> </ul>

Major EQ Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free Spirits</li> <li>• Authentic Experiencers</li> <li>• Rejuvenators</li> <li>• Cultural Explorers</li> </ul>
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Source: TOTA (2015)

**Figure 7 Alberta Household EQ Types, Biking Participation and Major Geographic Markets**



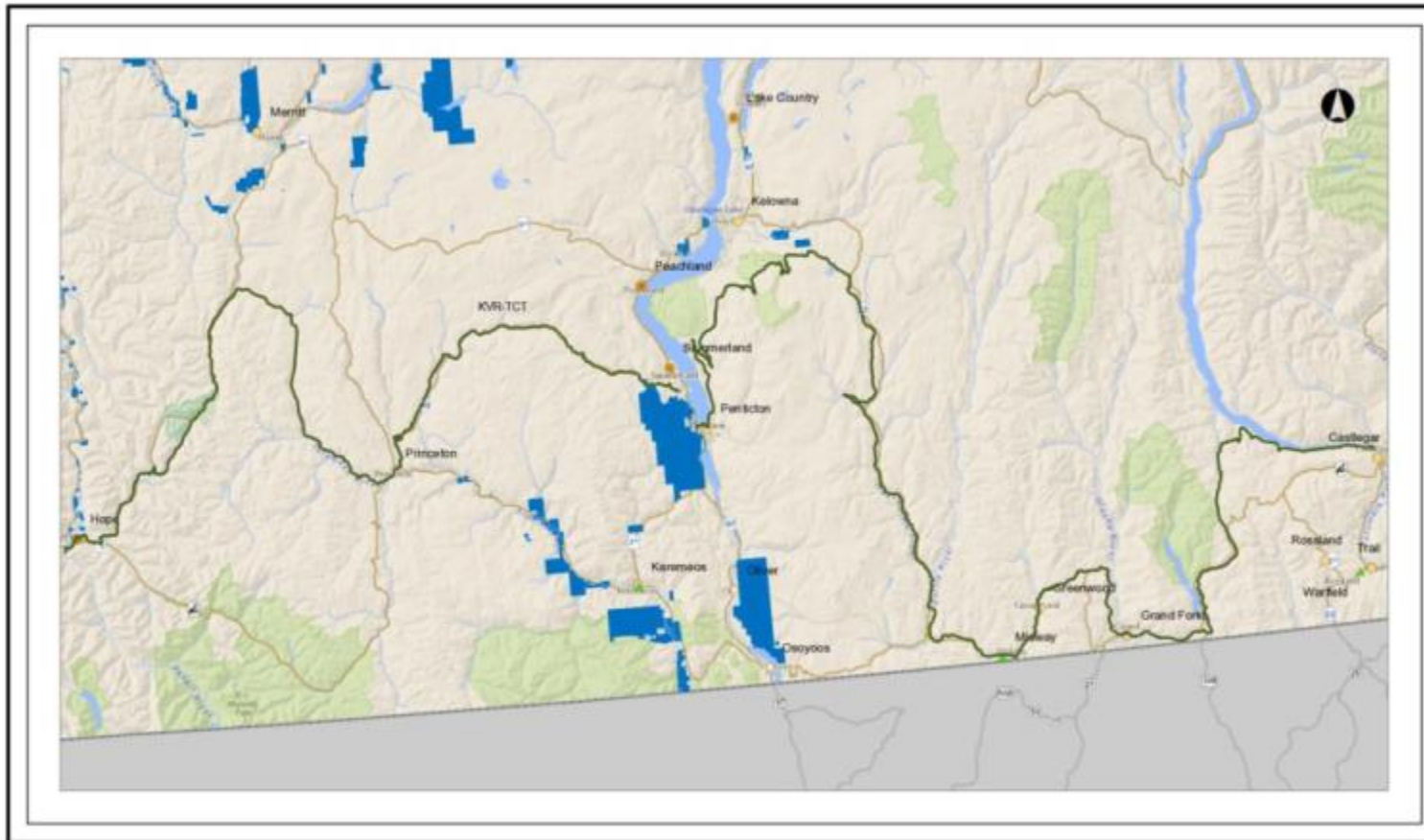
Biking Population+18	1,600,305
Major Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary</li> <li>• Edmonton</li> </ul>

Major EQ Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Hassle Travellers</li> <li>• Gentle Explorers</li> <li>• Authentic Experiencers</li> <li>• Free Spirits</li> </ul>
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Source: TOTA (2015)

## APPENDIX C – MAPS

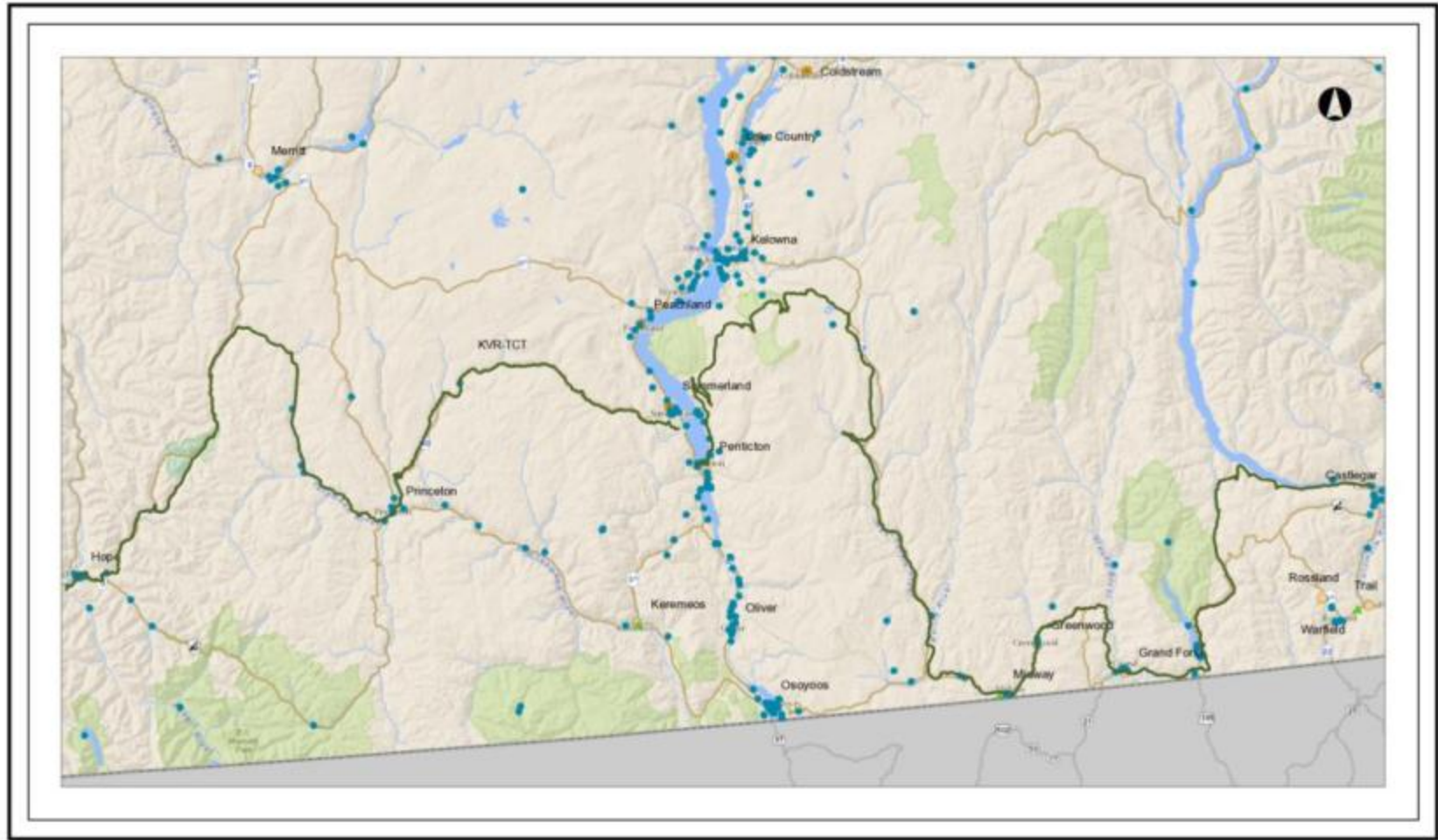
Figure 8 Indian Reserves



Source: Imap BC (2016)

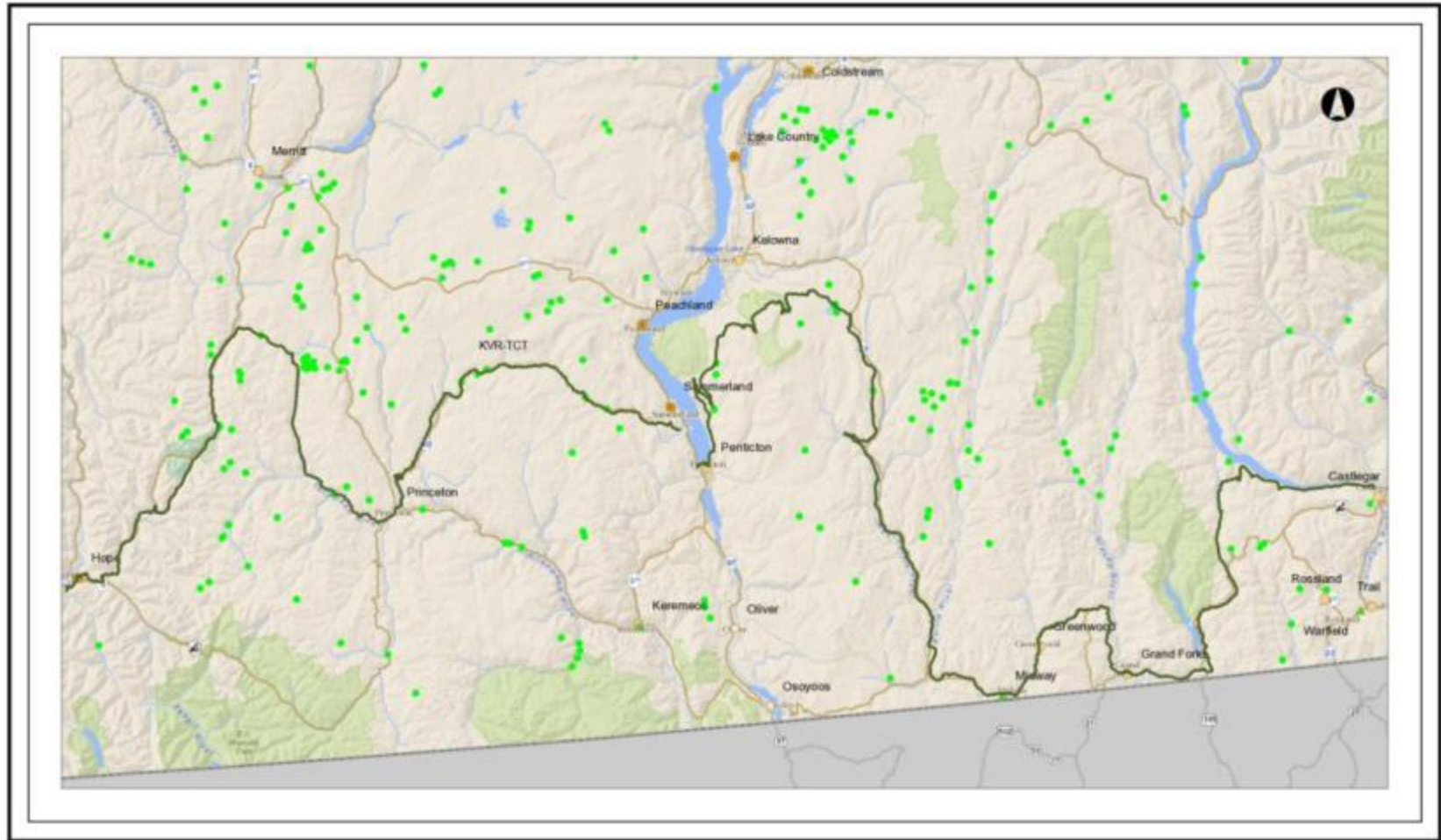


**Figure 9 HelloBC Accommodation Facilities**



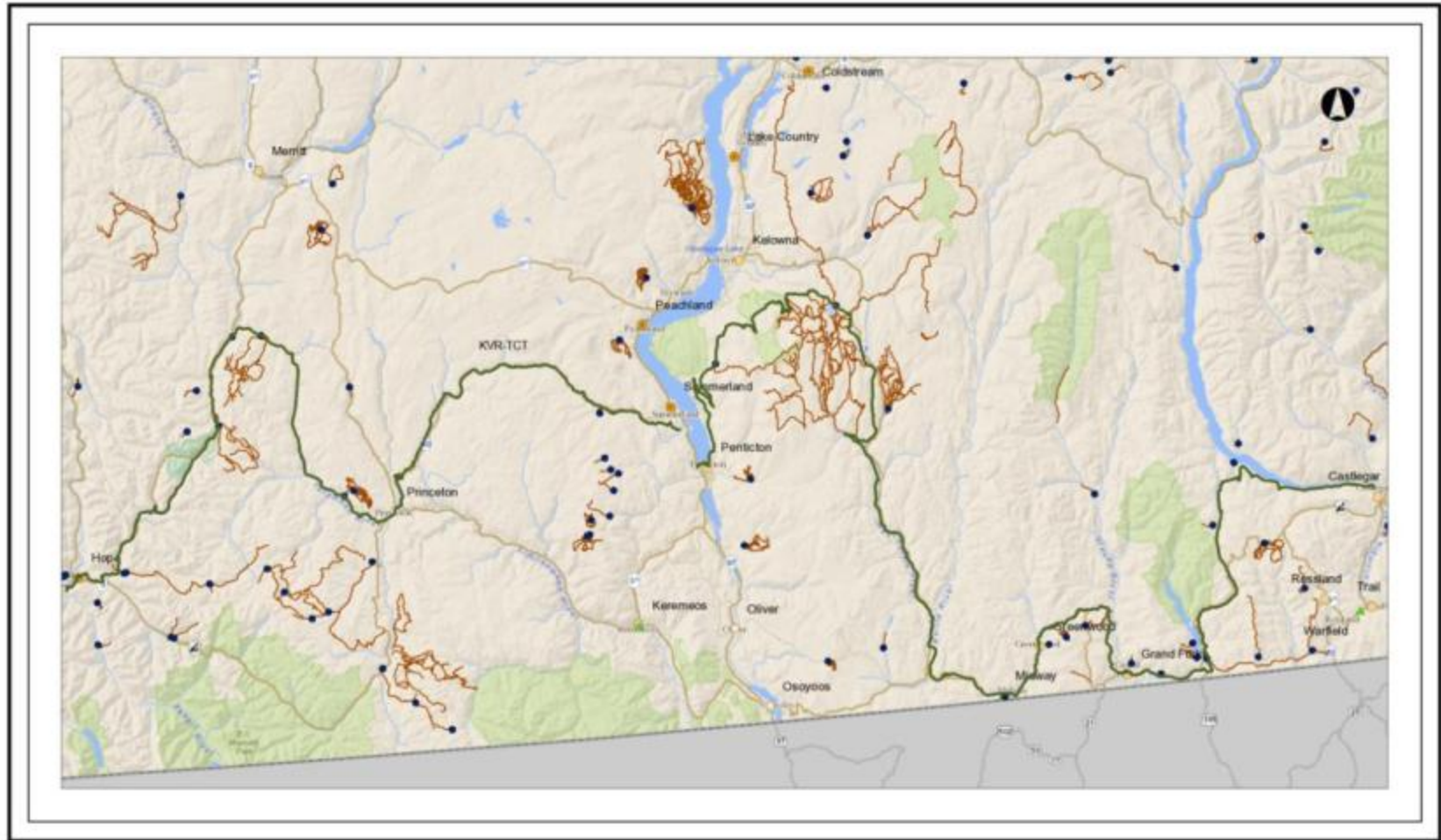
Source: Imap BC (2016)

Figure 10 Forest Recreation Sites



Source: Imap BC (2016)

Figure 11 Trails and Trail Heads



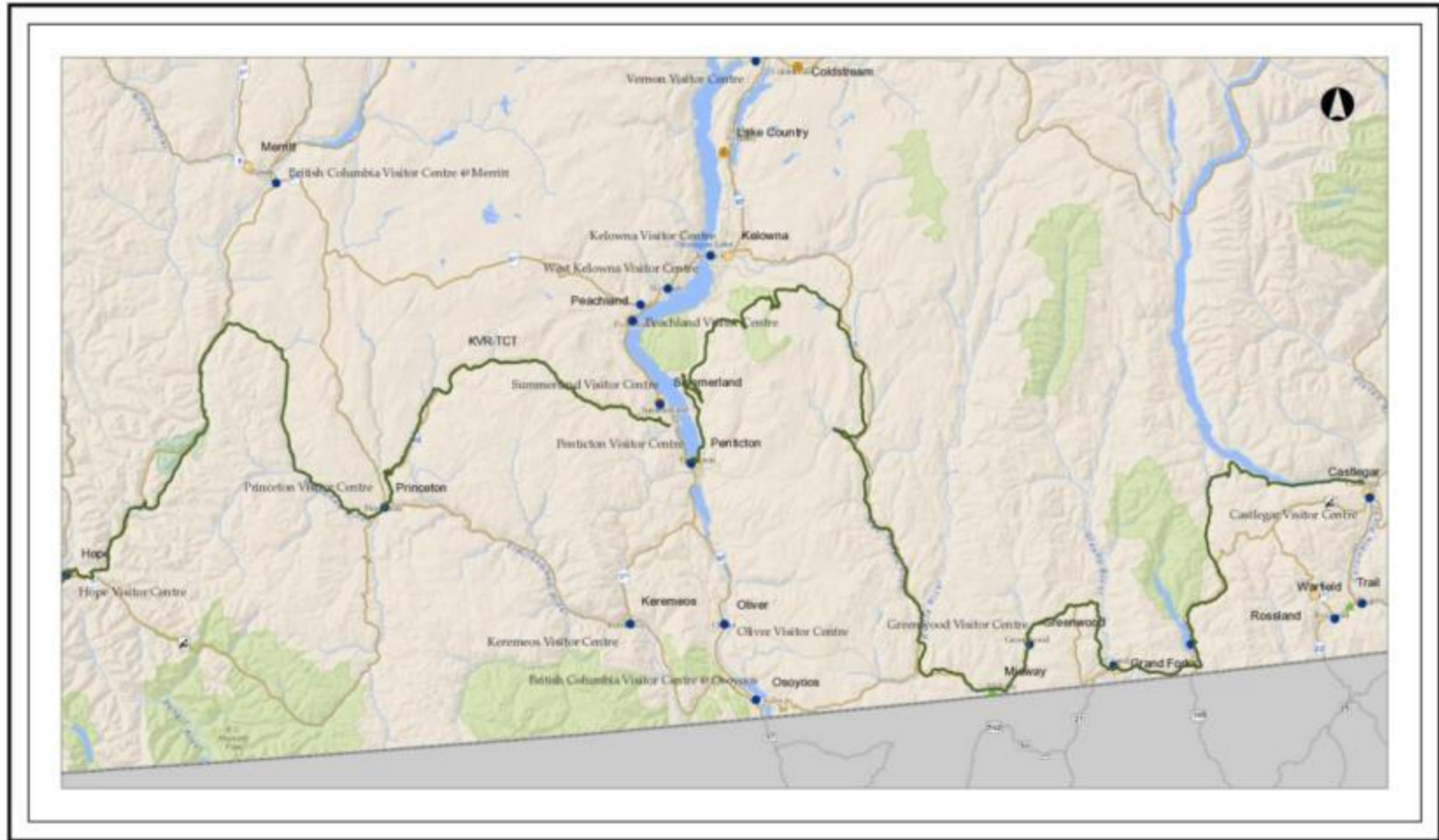
Source: Imap BC (2016)

**Figure 12 Parks and Protected Areas**



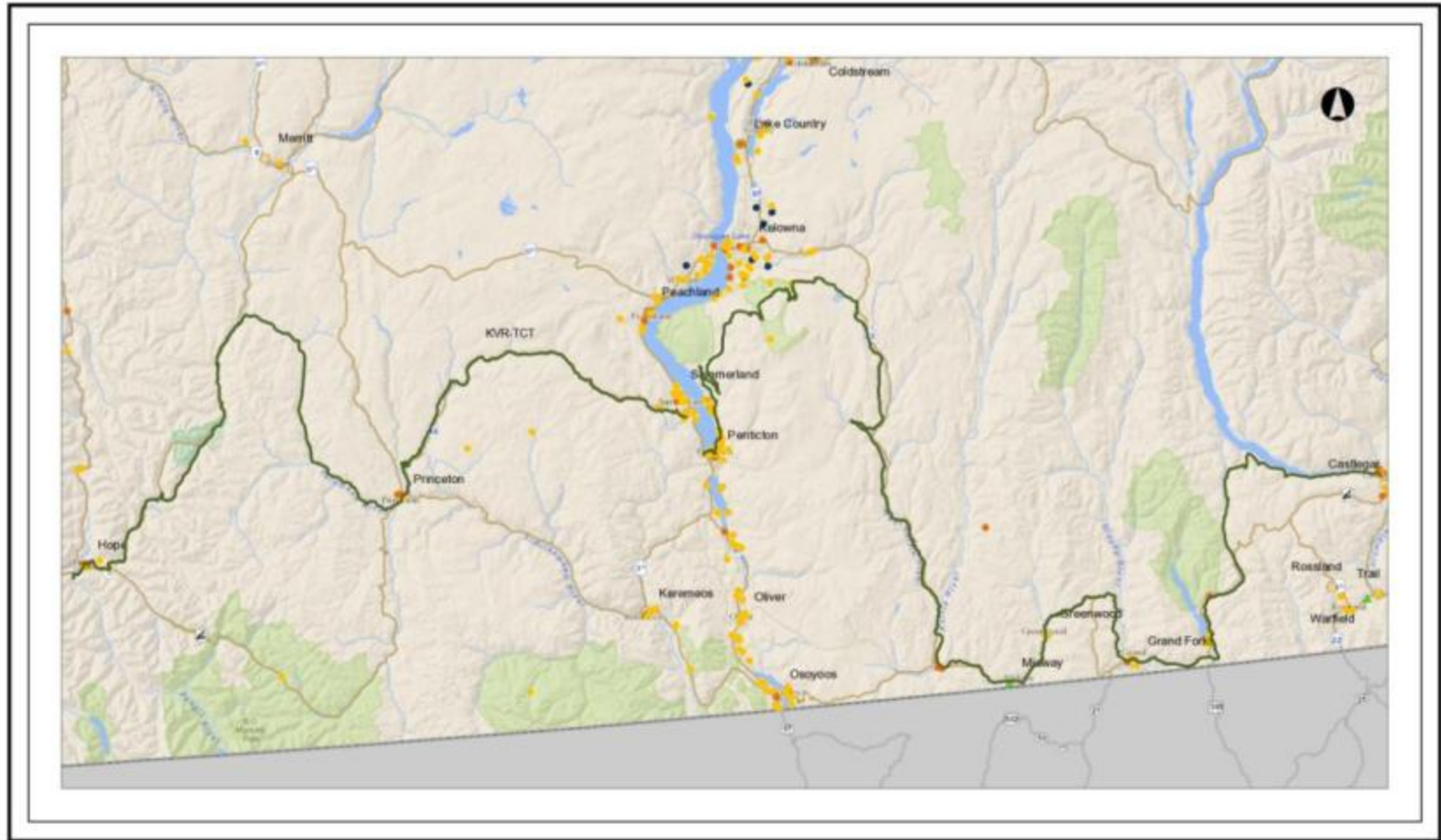
Source: Imap BC (2016)

Figure 13 Visitor Centres



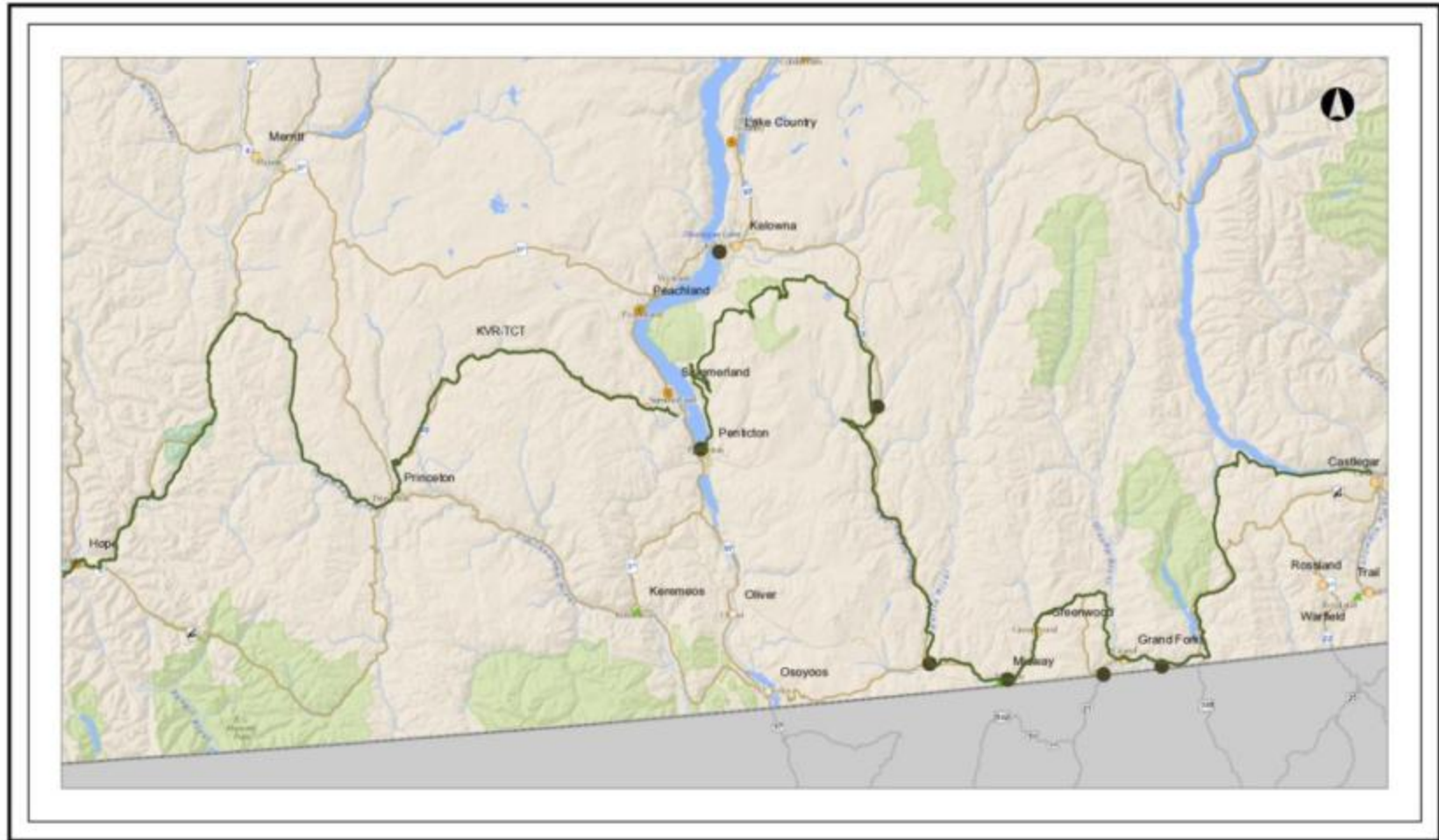
Source: Imap BC (2016)

Figure 14 Tourism Activities and Services



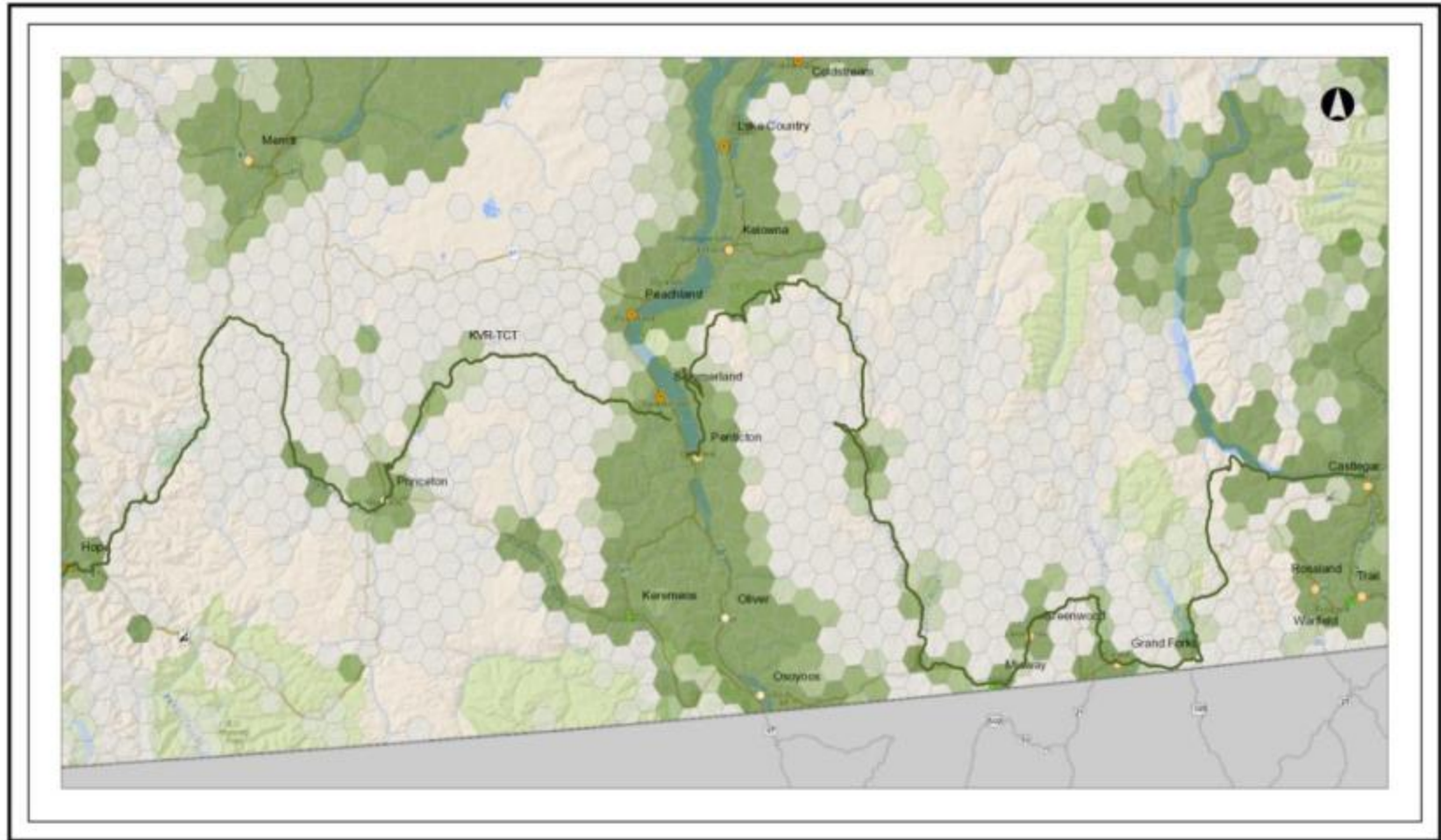
Source: Imap BC (2016)

Figure 15 Tourism Opportunities



Source: Imap BC (2016)

Figure 16 BC Network (Cell) Coverage



Source: Imap BC (2016)



Figure 17 Okanagan Rail Trail (Kelowna Pacific Rail Trail)



Source: Carter (2016)

## APPENDIX D - TRAILS BEST PRACTICES

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This section provides an overview of best practices that have been identified in relation to the management and marketing of the trail experience. Despite the substantial growth of trails and trails related activities both within Canada and elsewhere, there has been little written to formally document this area of good practice. The focus has tended to be on the actual planning and construction of trails, rather than on practices associated with leveraging the trail as an asset for tourism and economic development. This gap will be addressed to some extent in current work that is being undertaken by the European Travel Commission and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on the identification of best practices and marketing tools for the promotion of transnational themed tourism routes, including trails. In the meantime, the dissemination of trails related practices and solutions tends to be through conferences and symposiums such as the American Trails 2015 International Trails Symposium which attracted 760 attendees from 48 US states and 17 countries.

The following discussion is largely focused on rails to trails initiatives, but where practices from other types of trails are of value, these too have been highlighted. The emphasis is not on looking at a series of trails from a holistic perspective, but rather on identifying specific practices that are likely to be critical success factors in the development of a long-distance trail experience.

### **STRONG PUBLIC SECTOR SUPPORT AS A BASIS FOR COLLABORATION**

Developing long distance trails generally involves crossing multiple jurisdictional boundaries which in itself can present issues in developing and marketing the trail experience. A strong basis for effective collaboration is essential. Where public sector support for trails development is highly visible, there is clear evidence that this plays a significant role in kick starting the momentum, facilitating elements of development, and providing the much needed impetus to establish partnerships and alliances.

#### **Case-Study: Nga Haerenga, the New Zealand Cycle Trail**

The recent growth of trail and rail trail development in New Zealand has been substantial. Following the 2008 global recession, the Government allocated \$50 million<sup>8</sup> to implement cycle trails throughout New Zealand – from end to end. At the outset there were only three rail trails open to the public, and only the Otago Central Rail Trail provided opportunity for longer distance travel. However, the success of the latter was well documented<sup>9</sup> and was an influential factor in the instigation of the project.

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<sup>8</sup> Now amounts to almost \$55 million of Government funding in total.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Otago Central Rail Trust, *Otago Central Rail Trail: Economic Impact and Trends Survey 2008*. Research has been ongoing and work undertaken in 2011 indicated a 40% increase in users to 14,000, a 23% increase in daily per person expenditure, a growth in total output from \$7.2 million to \$12.3 million, and a growth in employment (FTEs) from 75 to 121. (*Otago Central Rail Trail User Survey 2010/2011*). The most recent work (*User Survey 2012/2015*) indicated a 15-16% decline on 2011 but still showed significant growth since 2008. Per person expenditure had increased by over 5% from 2011 and 30% since 2008.

The initiative, known as Nga Haerenga, the New Zealand Cycle Trail (NZCT) project, was designed to act as an economic catalyst and had three primary objectives:

- To create jobs through the design, construction and maintenance of the cycle network;
- To create a high-quality tourism asset which will enhance New Zealand's competitiveness as a tourism destination and provide on-going employment and economic development opportunities for regional economies; and,
- To maximise the range of complementary benefits that the cycle network provides to a wide range of New Zealanders. This includes events, recreational and health benefits.

The success of the project is noteworthy. Today a series of 23 sections totalling 2,575 kms have been funded and each of these trails is called a "Great Ride", recognising that they are premier rides, predominately off-road, that showcase the best of New Zealand in terms of landscapes, environment, culture and heritage. The trails cater to a spectrum of users from recreational cyclists to ardent mountain bikers. Using cycling to boost an ailing economy has inherent risks, but in this case the evidence to date suggests that the project has indeed had a marked impact on local economies. Government funding continues to be directed toward the project and in August 2015, the Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism John Key has indicated that the trails are boosting economic growth in the regions with reports from individual trails indicating that more than 1,200 jobs have been created. "Figures also indicate at least 60 new businesses have been established as a result of the Great Rides being built, and over 40 businesses have expanded their operations to cope with the new demand from cyclists"<sup>10</sup>. Trail use has grown, particularly from international markets and this market is proving to be one of high value with international cycling visitors spending approximately \$3,800 on their visits compared to the average of \$2,500, and 22% indicating that they spend more than \$5,500.

In the development of each trail element, the Government works with local partners and at least \$30 million of co-funding has been secured from regional stakeholders. One other partner, the Automobile Association, believes that the New Zealand Cycle Trail national project will play an important role in stimulating domestic tourism, which has lagged behind the growth of international tourism. Again preliminary evidence is indicating new demand. In a sample of four trails that are part of the Nga Haerenga project, an estimated 132,000 people cycled them in the four months up to March 2013, with 100,000 on the 99km Queenstown trail alone. The more challenging Mountains to the Sea trail, 317km from Tongariro National Park to Wanganui, attracted 8,000 cyclists during the same period, 87% of which were domestic visitors to the area<sup>11</sup>. Off-peak season use has increased.

Moving forward with the Network Expansion Project, on-road cycle touring routes are also being added to the New Zealand Cycle Trail, with the long-term goal of developing a nationwide cycle network that will allow local and international visitors to explore all of New Zealand by bike.

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<sup>10</sup> August 28, 2015, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/pm-announces-further-funding-alps-2-ocean-cycle-trail>

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, New Zealand, December 2013, *Nga Haerenga – The New Zealand Cycle Trail Evaluation Report*

### **Case-Study: Route Verte, Québec**

The Route Verte is a concept that has been under development since 1995. It currently offers 5,300 kms of bikeways linking over 400 municipalities across the various regions of Québec and has become a very strong catalyst for the development of cycling tourism. At the outset the Government of Québec announced that it would collaborate with Vélo Québec on the planning and construction of the Route Verte, investing \$88.5 million over ten years to develop the network. Vélo Québec has overseen the development of the Route Verte on behalf of the Government, and coordinates planning, inter-regional cooperation, communications and promotion of the initiative. The Route is marked with signs standardized by the Québec Ministry of Transportation.

The concept has been developed and expanded in a number of different ways, including by:

- Using public right-of-ways (abandoned rail corridors, towpaths, hydroelectric right-of-ways);
- Paving shoulders to make roads safer for cyclists;
- Identifying certain rural roads with little traffic as “designated cycling routes.”

The level of collaboration that underlies the project has been a significant factor in its success. The cooperation of various regional authorities (including regional development councils, regional county municipalities, regional tourist associations, regional sports and leisure agencies) is organized through regional committees. In combination, the total that has been invested in the project over the period 1995 to 2010 has amounted to \$240 million.

Baseline studies assessing the economic impact of the Route in 2000 indicated that Route Verte cyclists spent a total of \$95.4 million. Looking ahead, it was estimated that following the inauguration of the Route Verte in 2006, the amount spent annually by users would increase to \$134 million, and that this spending would generate over \$38 million in government revenues and help support 2,861 jobs (person years)<sup>12</sup>. A 2010 report estimates that annual spending on accommodation, food and transportation far exceeds \$100 million per annum, and is double that when spending on bicycles, clothing and accessories is taken into consideration<sup>13</sup>.

### **BRANDING**

The branding of a trail should underlie the entire visitor experience associated with the trail from signage and information panels, to the website, social media and other customer-facing components. The brand will ultimately promote recognition of the experience and should differentiate the trail or network of trails.

The most prominent visualisation of the brand on the ground will be in the signage associated with the trail. Carried out effectively, a branded way finding system provides much more than orientation and navigation. It can also be the basis for storytelling and should deepen the relationship between

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.routeverte.com/e/retombees\\_e](http://www.routeverte.com/e/retombees_e)

<sup>13</sup> Vélo Québec, *Bicycling in Québec in 2010*

the trail user and the trail itself. As much has been written about the technical elements of way finding and the development of trail signage strategies<sup>14</sup>, the following case-studies focus less on signage as an attribute of a successful trail, and more on examples of well executed branding.

### Case-Study: Nga Haerenga, the New Zealand Cycle Trail

It is hardly surprising that with the significant commitment to developing trails as an economic driver, considerable emphasis would be put on the branding and positioning of these trails<sup>15</sup>. Nga Haerenga means 'the journeys', both in a physical and spiritual sense and is synonymous with the type of experience that the New Zealand Cycle Trail is offering. The name also has the potential to capture the historical essence of the trails, and the brand has been designed to promote recognition of each trail as an element of a world class national system of cycle trails. The values underlying the brand speak to the exceptional experience that the trails will offer:

- The **promise**: The New Zealand Cycle Trail is a whole new take on exploring New Zealand
- The core **belief**: To truly experience the wonder of New Zealand you need to immerse yourself in it.
- The **role** of the New Zealand Cycle Trail organization: inspire and challenge people to discover and connect with New Zealand in a whole new way.
- The **offer**: The New Zealand Cycle Trail is a world class network which includes the Great Rides of New Zealand, all distinct and special in their own way.



Each Trail that is accredited as a New Zealand Great Ride has met initial criteria ensuring a world class cycling or mountain biking experience. The benefits of the Trail system have been clearly defined and each Trail is designed to provide as many of these benefits as possible:

<sup>14</sup> RailTrails Australia, 2004, *Signage Development for Rail Trails: A guide to good practice for the design of signage for rail trails*

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 2010, *Trail Signage Guidelines for the New York State Park System*

<sup>15</sup> September 2012, *The New Zealand Cycle Trail: Brand Rules and Guidelines for Use*

- **World Class** cycle trails
- Breath taking **views**
- **Relaxed fun** or **healthy** exertion
- **Fresh tastes** of local food, wine, beer
- **Unexpected delights** every day
- **Discover** interesting histories, art and craft
- **Variety** of trails from easy to advanced
- **Meet the locals** along the way
- Sense of **achievement** at the end of the day's ride
- **Making remote** parts of New Zealand more **accessible**
- Go **green**
- **Time to connect** with friends, family and the places you visit



The use of the logo is restricted to the Great Trails and only Official Partners can use it for marketing purposes. The significance of the brand and its underlying values has been clearly highlighted to those using it, to ensure that visitors who ride the trails know what to expect and that there is consistency in how the New Zealand Cycle Trail is presented at a national and international level.

#### **Case-Study: Vennbahn Cycle Route, Europe**

The Vennbahn Cycle Route, one of Europe's longest converted railway embankment bike tracks, has been developed as a tourism product that can maximize the rail bed asset, the region's scenic beauty and its cultural heritage. The 125 km trail passes through Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg and is part of the EuroVelo – the European cycle route network consisting of 18 transnational routes. In developing the route, careful consideration has been given to four elements: the natural offer; infrastructure, services, and marketing.



A well-defined brand mark has been developed and is core to all marketing and signage activities. The logo depicts vanishing railway sleepers, the route's extended way, its slight gradient, and people on the move. It is highly visible on all online and offline collateral and on associated infrastructure, including bicycles that are available for hire. The logo has shaped the look of the consumer and trade show stands, and the use of the yellow for the clothing of the marketing representatives increases the visibility of the product.



<http://www.vennbahn.eu/en>

## STORYTELLING AND TRAIL INTERPRETATION

The importance of revealing the story has been highlighted in the Thompson Okanagan 10-year regional tourism strategy<sup>16</sup>. Promoting the stories of the natural and cultural heritage plays a significant role in helping the visitor connect with the destination and in enhancing the overall experience. This is as applicable to trails as it is to destinations and highlights the importance of strategic interpretive planning in developing a trail as a visitor experience.

*An interpretive plan prods, digs, and reveals. It moves beyond factual information to offer new insights into what makes an area special. It reveals the subtle and the sublime. It creates venues that engage your visitors and help them grasp the points you want to get across. It requires looking at a site from multiple perspectives, from management to maintenance, from existing audiences to target audiences. In the end, what emerges is a thoughtful, systematic strategy to pique interest and capture the hearts of people<sup>17</sup>.*

### Case-Study: Vennbahn Cycle Route, Europe

*There is not much left to remind one of the quantities of freight that once rolled up and down the Fen-Rail between Aachen and the north of the Grand Duchy. A handful of deserted station buildings, as in Raeren, Walheim or Sourbrodt, the occasional rusting wagon, coach or locomotive, a few signals, frozen in time ... these silent witnesses are all that remain of a glorious past<sup>18</sup>.*

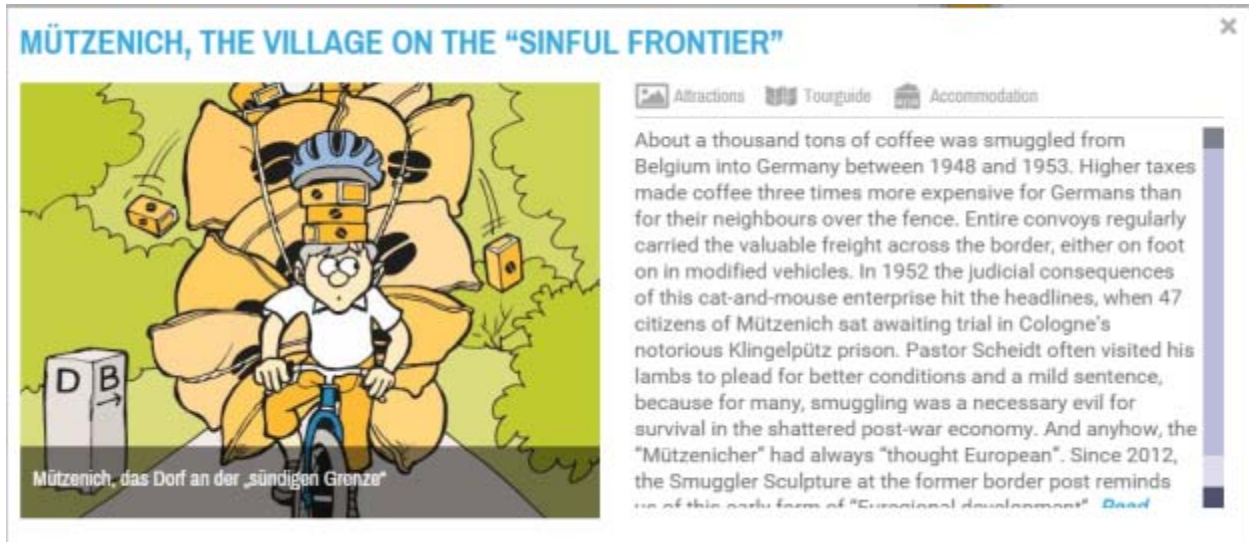
Storytelling, however, can bring the past to life and the Vennbahn has made this a core element of the visitor experience. The history of each section is portrayed through the use of customised comic illustrations.

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<sup>16</sup> TOTA, November 2012, *Embracing our Potential – a Ten-Year Tourism Strategy for the Thompson Okanagan Region: 2012-2022*

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/planning/interpretive-master-plan-Rigby.html>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.vennbahn.eu/en/das-projekt/>



Complementary products are now being developed that includes audio tours and a new Vennbahn film "Vennbahn – A Path of Transmission" won the 'Golden City Gate 2015' prize at ITB for the category of TV commercials. This film was developed in partnership with the East Belgium Tourism Agency and presents an emotionally charged and visually intense view of the former railway's history and its modern destiny as a cycle route, criss-crossing three frontiers – a tale of transmitting something of value from one generation to another<sup>19</sup>.

### QUALITY CERTIFICATION AND OFFICIAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

The trail is the basis for a visitor experience. To promote and develop the concept of an experience requires much more than the trail infrastructure and its promotion. It requires consistency of quality in all the related services and activities – a factor that is clearly addressed in trails and trail networks that demonstrate success and a strong impact on local and regional economies.

#### Case-Study: Route Verte, Québec

Vélo Québec has developed a quality certification program to assist in addressing the issue of consistency and to ensure that the needs of cyclists are met. **Bienvenue cyclistes!** Certification is open to accommodation establishments within five kms from Route Verte – B&Bs, hotels and campgrounds – that wish to attract cyclists. The program provides greater visibility for these businesses and certifies that they are offering bike-friendly services on the basis of the meeting the following criteria<sup>20</sup>:



At B&Bs, hotels and other establishments:

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.vennbahn.eu/en>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.routeverte.com/e/certification\\_e](http://www.routeverte.com/e/certification_e)



- A covered and locked space where bicycles can be stored at night.
- If food service is available, high-carb meals with larger-than-average portions of fruits and vegetables.
- A pump and tools for making minor repairs.
- Information on local bicycle repair and rental outlets and regional tourist information centres.

At campgrounds:

- Camping spaces for visitors with or without reservations as long as they are travelling exclusively by bicycle.
- A sheltered location where touring cyclists can eat during bad weather.
- A pump and tools for making minor repairs.
- Information on local bicycle repair and rental outlets and regional tourist information centres.

The program identifies the basic requirements but a number of *Bienvenue cyclistes!* facilities have developed a range of related services, such as baggage transportation, while others are collaborating with tourism and economic development partners to play a role in creating local bike routes. These initiatives are further strengthening the *Bienvenue cyclistes!*<sup>TM</sup> brand.

Participation in the certification program is on the basis of an annual fee that varies from \$142 to \$342 depending on the nature and size of the accommodation establishment. Today there are approximately 500 members in the network.

### **Case-Study: New Zealand Cycle Trail Official Partner Programme**

In a similar manner the NZCT's Official Partner Programme has been created to facilitate the delivery of a quality experience, enhance the country's reputation as a premier cycling destination, strengthen the brand of the NZCT, and provide local businesses with an opportunity to leverage the focus on cycle trails. The Programme was launched in 2011 and now has over 400 Official Partner businesses.

To become an Official Partner, a business must meet and maintain certain cycle-friendly standards. These include selling or promoting products or services that relate to the NZCT; providing a warm welcome and a high level of customer service for cyclists; and providing useful first-hand knowledge about the NZCT, including maps and brochures<sup>21</sup>. The NZCT website has highlighted a series of business success stories to demonstrate the benefits from participating in the program, profiling operators that provide cycle hire and guiding services, repair servicing, cycle packaging, related ferry services, and hospitality support for local events associated with trails. The program is not limited to local operators, but includes a number of national partners such as AA Traveller and Interislander (New Zealand's ferry service provider).

The searchable trip planning elements of the website clearly profile the various partners.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://nzcycletrail.com/official-partners/official-partner-programme/>

## USING TRAILS AS THE BASIS FOR DEVELOPING NEW EVENTS

Developing new events associated with trails has the effect of promoting the trail experience and utilizing the trail infrastructure to create new revenue within the adjacent communities.

### **Case-study: Rails to Trails Conservancy, United States**

*The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people<sup>22</sup>. The organization has over 160,000 members and supporters, and serves as the national voice for 30,000 miles of rail-trails and multi-use trails, and more than 8,000 miles of potential trails waiting to be built. The organization is involved in a wide range of trails related activities from trail building services and policy work, to promotion, research and trail mapping.*

One particular activity that RTC engages in as a trail building tool is the organization and promotion of Rail-Trail Sojourns. These premier RTC biking events are designed to celebrate open trails and draw attention to gaps in would-be trail systems that, if completed, could result in innumerable benefits (economic, health, social, environmental and much more) for their local regions. These events have influenced the creation and growth of numerous regional trail alliances and tangibly demonstrate the potential for economic return. In 2014 the Greenway Sojourn brought 300 riders together for a 307 km six-day trip on three renowned rail trails: the Panhandle Trail, the Montour Trail and the Great Allegheny Passage. It is designed to allow participants to stop and explore the communities and attractions along the way. The cost to participate varies from approximately US\$590-\$690.

### **Case-Study: the Bibbulmun Track, Australia**

The Bibbulmun Track stretches 1,000 km through the heart of the South West of Western Australia. While only partially a rail-trail, this long-distance track aligns closely with the travel routes of the Bibbulmun Aborigines, and is for walkers only. *The Track takes walkers through towering karri and tingle forests, down mist-shrouded valleys, over giant granite boulders and along breathtaking coastal heathlands. It passes through many of the most beautiful national parks of the south west forests and coastline<sup>23</sup>. It offers a wide range of experiences from a short stroll to an epic eight week adventure, with some sections having many days between permitted access points (up to four days) and long distances between towns (the longest being 12 days).*

The Bibbulmun Track Foundation is an incorporated, not-for-profit organisation established to provide support for the management, maintenance and marketing of the Bibbulmun Track. While the Department of Parks and Wildlife, acts as Manager of the Track, the Bibbulmun Track Foundation is recognised as the primary focal point for community-based support and involvement, and has primary responsibility for promoting the Track to potential walkers and maintaining the Track through

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.railstotrails.org/about/about-us/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/the-track/>

a volunteer maintenance program. As part of its mission, the Foundation has responsibility for the development of tourism opportunities and sees events as a key element of its work. A variety of events to suit all ages and fitness levels are offered from guided walks to learning how to cook creatively on a fuel stove. An events calendar is published twice a year and is also available online<sup>24</sup>. It promotes a range of weekend events, and offers 'highlights' itineraries (a combination of day walks with off-track accommodation and transportation between the Track and accommodation each day), together with themed events and age specific hikes (e.g. 60+; Walking with Mum; Walking with Dad etc.). Most of the events have a cover charge, and would appear to be highly popular given the numbers that are currently showing as 'full'.

In addition to this range of activities, the Foundation promotes the Bibbulmun Team Challenge, allegedly the most unique physical and mental team building challenge in Western Australia. Sixty-four participants take part each year, and many organizations and corporations enter a team on an annual basis.

### **DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING A HOLISTIC PRODUCT**

The trails provide an infrastructure for a range of activities. Developing a quality trail experience involves thinking well beyond the actual infrastructure and anticipating the visitor's needs, trip planning requirements, and the complementary services that enhance the experience and increase participation rates.

#### **Case-Study: Vennbahn Cycle Route, Europe**

A primary objective underlying the development of the Vennbahn Cycle Route was the promotion of rural development, active tourism and local employment. The Route was planned as a holistic concept that looked at a range of elements from the outset – including branding and online and offline marketing; storytelling, signage and information exhibits designed to meet the needs of tourists; infrastructural projects (cycle bridge, picnic areas and shelters, safe-road crossings, illuminated tunnels); 'complementary infrastructure' (480 km of mountain bike paths, 3 bike parks etc.); complementary services (a cross-border network of e-bike hire stations – 150 e-bikes available in 2013, the development of bed+bike accommodation, bike shuttle, innovative cuisine options); audio tours to interpret the unique cultural and natural heritage; and, packaging through the East Belgium Tourist Agency. A new "Vennbahn Plus" Tour Planner has just been developed with information on 16 connecting tracks and all the associated attractions. Given this focus on developing a holistic concept, it is hardly surprising that the Vennbahn Cycle Route has won international recognition and a series of awards in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/walk-the-track/events-calendar/>

### **Case-study: Railtrailsnz.com, New Zealand**

This website is a gateway to five of New Zealand's best grade 1 & 2 multi-day trails. The mission of the initiative is *to provide our customers with the best possible EASY cycling experiences in New Zealand. Each trail in whatever location will provide a consistent level of support and service, providing you the confidence to cycle with any of our trail members.*

The collaborative aims to offer a complete and easy to organize cycle vacation package and a one stop source of contact for:

- Quality cycles – rental of comfortable and well-maintained bikes.
- Trip planning and route guide information on where to ride, where to stay, how far, current weather conditions, trail surface, what to see and do, including access to guides.
- Free one-stop accommodation booking service – with easily accessed information on what is available, when and how much.
- Luggage transfers through the use of a daily shuttle service.
- Trail shuttles – for those travelling one way and wishing for a return shuttle.
- Independent or supported tours.
- Fully guided tours offering insights into local stories and experiences.



The portal takes the visitor through to templated websites for each of the five rides and offers the user a wide range of ride options, trail maps, accommodation, cycle hire, shuttle services, and special offers etc.

### **THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

The use of technology for trip planning and the enhancement of the visitor experience is largely dependent on the effective use of a comprehensive database and the capability to layer information on maps in an innovative and visually pleasing manner. Examples of best practice show that innovative technological solutions are required at a wide range of levels, from national and international trip planning tools highlighting all trail opportunities within a jurisdiction, through to planning tools for an individual trail and sections within it, and finally to mobile-focused uses of technology to improve the experience while on the trail.

### **Case-study: <http://www.biroto.eu/en/>**

Biroto.eu provides a comprehensive searchable database for 518,382 km of cycle paths in Europe. it includes 651 official cycle routes and 349 individual cycle tours of members, and points of interest relating to cycle friendly accommodation, sights and attractions, information points, bicycle repair shops, ferries, bike lockers and charging stations, cycling guides and travel reports from members of the biroto community. Biroto.eu is a 'community' website and individuals can add to the data base as well as use its resources.

For each cycle path and each tour there is an interactive map and the elevation profile of the path, downloadable GPS tracks, information about cyclist-friendly accommodations (Beds4Cyclists), and local attractions and resources along the path. The Vennbahn Cycle Route and the related information can be viewed at: <http://www.biroto.eu/en/cycle-route/europe/vennbahn-cycle-route/rt00001291>

The tour information for each route is available to download as a gpx file for registered users of bioto. For anyone who wishes to edit the route, the track points can be amended using appropriate software, such as GPSies (<http://www.gpsies.com>). Software of this nature can be used for the compilation of tracks from multiple sub-tracks and will allow users to add additional information such as elevation to each track point.

(A review of the GPSies website and mapping shows that this free software is already well used with BC – the map interface that is being populated is OpenStreetMap.)

Once the bioto file has been downloaded, the user can continue to use the action menu to access information and identify the location of accommodation, attractions or related tourism infrastructure, and related descriptive text. The database includes an accommodation rating system that is based on ratings that reflect the needs of cyclists, and many of the hyperlinks give you the opportunity to zoom in on the exact location of the facility or attraction.

### **Case-Study: the Bibbulmun Track, Australia**

The Bibbulmun Track website has a comprehensive trip planning component. The Track has been subdivided into nine sections, with each section providing Google-based mapping with a toggle legend that can show towns, access points, campsites, accommodation and food & beverage services, local transport operators, equipment suppliers, internet access provider, tourist attractions, wineries, tours, visitor information centres, realignments, diversions, and inlet crossings<sup>25</sup>. A distance calculator, descriptive text on highlights and attractions, a gallery of images, information on maintenance issues and diversions, and groups currently booked to be on site are all provided for those planning a trip.

### **Case-study: Hadrian's Wall Trails App, England**

The free app is designed to improve the visitor experience of the 118 km trail Wall. The development of the app was commissioned by the Hadrian's Wall Trust – a charitable trust set up to manage all aspects of the World Heritage Site for the long-term benefit of local and regional communities, including contributing to the social and economic benefit of communities through the development of sustainable tourism and a sense of place. The Trust has recently completed a major project involving the conservation of several sections of the Wall at risk and improvement of access. To complement this work, the new app has been designed to enable visitors explore a number of major conservation projects along the Wall through the eyes of different characters – John Clayton the 19th century antiquarian who did much to preserve the Wall and reveal its secrets; Brenda Armstrong, a local farmer; a modern day Stonemason who repairs the Wall and Praefectus Arthitecti, a Roman

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/trip-planner/>

soldier engineer who was tasked with building the Wall on the orders of emperor Hadrian. The app is available on both iOS and Android platforms and went live at the beginning of September 2014. The characters take the visitor through time and space to bring a different angle on the history and significance of Hadrian's Wall past and present – text and audio. The App is designed for use at various locations along the Wall. All information is stored within the app, so a data signal is not required to use it. However, if GPS is enabled on the smart phone, the app can then be used to identify closest points of interest to any specific location. The app is integrated with Twitter and Facebook, and provides a note-taking option.

While the app is a standalone component of the visitor experience, it has also been designed to integrate with the Wall Face Exhibit<sup>26</sup>. The exhibition has been organised jointly through a partnership of organizations across the Wall and is the first time that all 11 Roman sites and museums across the 150 mile Roman frontier zone have joined together to put on a single Wall-wide exhibition. The project provides visitors with the opportunity to view art from the National Portrait Gallery and is increasing visitation to museums and Wall alike.

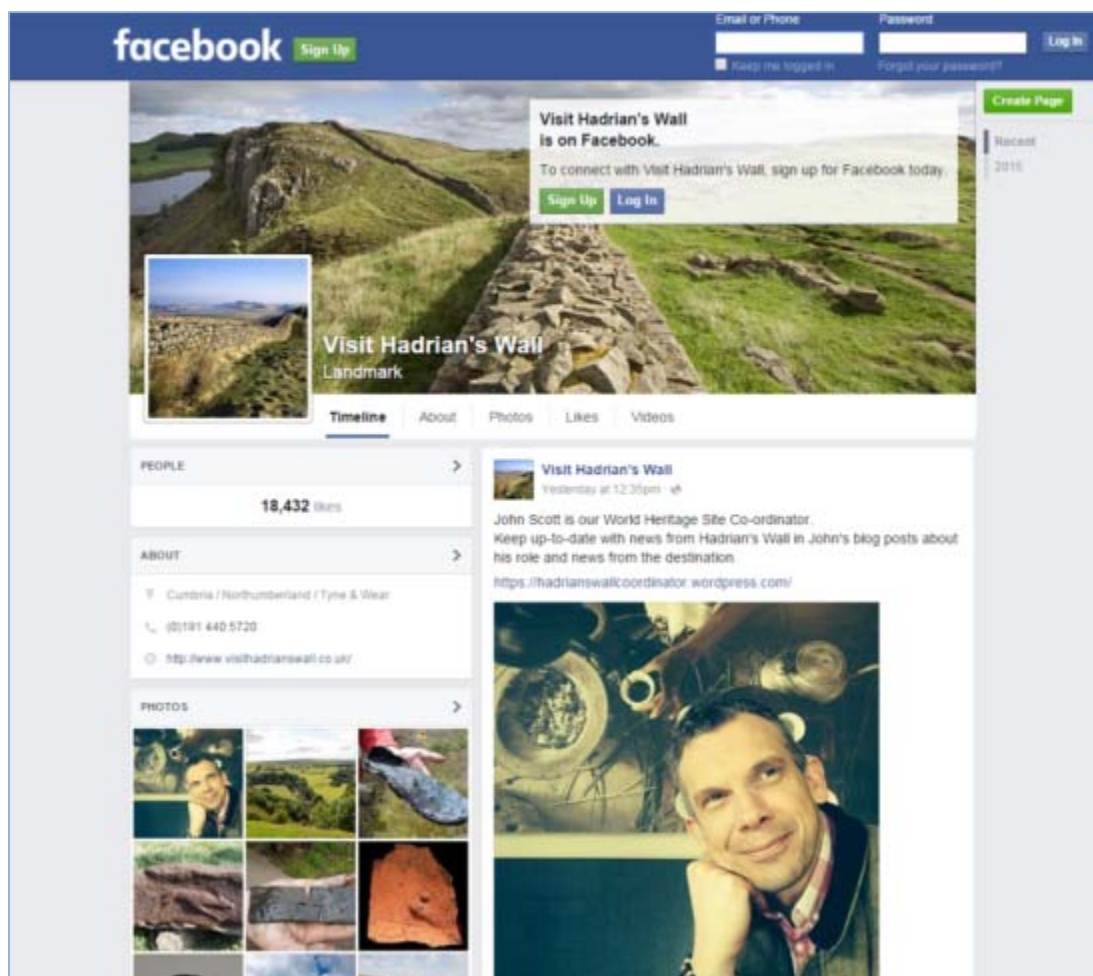
The initiative's use of technology – mobile, online web presence and use of social media is entirely integrated and together present a dynamic onsite and offsite visitor experience and a new online learning resource for schools. The following screen shots show the various components of the online experience.



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<sup>26</sup> Wall Face is funded by Arts Council England through its Renaissance strategic support programme and supported by the National Portrait Gallery and by partners from across Hadrian's Wall, part of the international Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site.





### Case-study: Bruce Trail App, Ontario

The Bruce Trail App is a more conventional trail user app available for use on iOS and Android devices. It allows users to plan, track, and log their hikes on Canada's oldest and longest marked footpath. The app can be downloaded at a cost of \$19.99 and ensures that hikers and cyclists are carrying the most up-to-date Bruce Trail information. If the smart phone has GPS functionality, location functions and tracking will still work without internet Wi-Fi connection. The ability to track location allows the visitor to readily access further details on campsites, parking lots and side trails. Where GPS functionality is unavailable, the trail user is still able to access the Bruce Trail topographic maps. The 'Did You Know?' section provides news and information about the Trail and the app alerts the user of any changes to the Trail.

### FRIENDSHIP TRAILS

The Friendship Trails project is an initiative of the World Trails Network. The Network brings trail associations, trail advocates, enthusiasts and professionals together from around the world to foster global collaboration and networking, while promoting an understanding of the culture of walking and



boosting local economies. The concept is based on ‘twinning’ whereby trails in different countries partner for the purposes of mutual publicity and international cooperation.

### **Case-study: Bruce Trail Conservancy, Canada**

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is the only Canadian member of the Network and has pioneered the concept of Friendship Trails in Canada. The Conservancy has now established ‘friendship’ with seven international trails, and in each case a section of route on the Bruce Trail and a corresponding route on an international trail have been designated as a Friendship Trail, displaying special signs to mark the partnership.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy’s current Friendship Trails include:

- The Jeju Olle Friendship Trail (South Korea)
- The Lebanon Mountain Trail Friendship Trail (Lebanon)
- The Cotswold Way Friendship Trail (England)
- The Offa's Dyke Path Friendship Trail (Wales)
- The Rim of Africa Friendship Trail (South Africa)
- The Pacific Slope Trail (Costa Rica)
- The Bibbulmun Track (Australia)

## **FUNDING INITIATIVES**

Developing a sustainable funding strategy for long distance trails and trail networks is always fraught with challenges. Failure to generate the necessary operating costs for maintenance, marketing and the development of the visitor experience can result in the gradual demise of the trail experience and the under-utilization of a prime tourism asset. The following case-studies are examples of initiatives that appear to make some contribution to the sustainability of trails, but it is unlikely that any one approach on its own will be adequate.

### **Case-study: crowd funding**

The concept of crowd funding is new to the trails ‘arena’, but examples have already demonstrated that it can potentially provide the kick-start funds that are often required to get a project off the ground.

- A UK mountain biking organization, Ride Sheffield, has successfully used crowd funding to create the country’s first ever crowd funded trail. The Lady Cannings Trail on the Sheffield and Peaks border opened in July 2015 following a successful campaign to raise over £15,000. Alongside the generosity of local riders and cycling clubs, the initiative resulted in the development of a partnership with Sheffield based outdoor equipment specialist *Go Outdoors* who have committed £60,000 to the ongoing development of the project over the next three years, on top of their initial contribution to the opening phase.
- Operation Trail Marker has been launched by Glendale Parks & Open Space Foundation, in collaboration with Los Angeles Magazine, to improve trail signage in the Verdugo Mountains

of Glendale, California through raising \$20,000. The Verdugos offer over 40 kms of trails and fire roads for hiking and biking but lack a good system of trail signage. The crowdfunder initiative is still underway.

### **Case-study: trail advocacy user groups**

Trail Fund NZ<sup>27</sup> is an interest/advocacy group that has been established to support the development and maintenance of trails (in this case mountain biking trails) through memberships, donations (with tax receipts), the sale of online merchandise, and partnerships with retail and service partners that have agreed to donate 1% of transactions carried out with Trail Fund NZ partners to the fund.

### **Case-study: user fees**

Examples of user fees are difficult to identify. Trails are often seen as a public good, and user fees for non-mechanised activities are unusual. However, the following have been noted:

- The Route of the Hiawatha rail trail in Idaho is 24 kms and has ten tunnels and seven high trestles. User fees to ride or walk are in place - \$10/adult or \$49/adult for a season pass. A pay-as-you go shuttle service is also available. In addition a range of bicycles are available for hire. Access can be controlled, which in itself assists with putting the user fee system in place, and the trail, trailhead and facilities have specific hours of opening.
- The George S. Mickelson Trail is a 175 km non-motorized multi use (bike, horse, hike) rail trail in the Black Hills region of South Dakota, with over 100 converted railroad bridges four rock tunnels, and approximately 14 kms of additional branch trails. All trail users aged 12 and over are required to have a trail pass. The trail passes are available for \$3/day or \$15 for an annual pass and can be obtained from authorized vendors or at self-sale trail pass stations located at all 15 trail heads. Passes must be located on the person or the bicycle and failure to do so results in a fine. In addition, there is an annual 3-day ride that covers almost the entire trail. A registration fee of \$180 includes trail pass, shuttle service, snacks, three meals and one voucher for dinner in an adjacent city. The event sells out.
- Other US rail trails that charge a user fee include the 82 km Bike Prairie Spirit Trail in Kansas, the 52 km Elroy-Sparta State Bike Trail in Wisconsin, the Cannon Valley Rail Trail and the 193 km Mesabi Trail – both in Minnesota.

### **Case-study: trail services – booking ‘commission’**

The Hauraki Rail Trail is one of the five rail trails profiled by RailTrailsNZ. The Hauraki Rail Trail Charitable Trust is responsible for maintaining the trail and is fundraising to complete a new section of the trail with estimated costs of NZD \$4 million. In the case of this particular trail, 15% of each booking for services through RAILS TRAIL NZ is paid to the Trust at no additional cost to the user, for trail maintenance and improvement. This arrangement is not in place with the other four trails.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://trailfund.org.nz/>

### **Case-study: sponsorship**

The Bibbulmun Track Foundation has a strong sponsorship program in place with partnerships with a range of organisations and businesses. Partnership levels vary from AUD\$50,000 as Premier Sponsor through to \$2,500 for Bronze level. Newmont Boddington Gold is a Premier Sponsor. The company is a gold mining and processing operation adjacent to the Bibbulmun Track. The sponsorship is used to fund the activities of the Foundation's volunteer 'Eyes on the Ground' maintenance program. The Bibbulmun Track is managed and maintained locally along its length by the six Department of Parks and Wildlife districts through which it passes. This role is shared with the Foundation's volunteer program. The Track is divided into 147 maintenance sections, varying in length from 5-10km and volunteers are trained to look after a section. This sponsored maintenance program contributes significantly towards ensuring that the Track offers a world-class walking experience. The program involves 350 volunteers. Further information on the role of each sponsor is available on the website<sup>28</sup>.

### **Case-study: the Entertainment Book**

The Bibbulmun Track Foundation<sup>29</sup> has partnered with the Entertainment Book to attract additional funds. Twenty per cent of the purchase of every membership is donated to the Foundation.

## **CONCLUSION**

As can be seen from this review of best practices, there are many factors to be considered in developing a world-class rail trail visitor experience. The quality of the rail trail infrastructure and its ongoing maintenance are obviously key to its success, but building the experience will require a significant focus of effort on all the other elements: the branding, marketing and promotion; the signage and provision of information for trail users; the online trip planning attributes and the use of mobile technologies to enhance trip planning and the overall experience; the partnerships with local communities and businesses to develop complementary services and deliver a holistic product; and, the collaboration that will be required to put a sustainable business model into place. It is this integrated public-private partnership and strategic approach to the development of trails that is the hallmark of the many trails profiled in this section and the basis of their success.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/get-involved/partnerships>

<sup>29</sup> The Bibbulmun Track Foundation has been featured in a number of these case-studies. Data available from 2011/12 shows a breakdown of the organisation's funding model for that year. Thirty-eight per cent of the Foundation's gross income came from earned income including walking breaks, tours, guided walks, hire gear and merchandise sales; 14% from sponsorship; membership fees contributed 10%; fee for services from Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation contributed 11%; and 27% came from other income generated by donations and fundraising.

## APPENDIX E – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### Acknowledgements

This process has been facilitated by Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association with the assistance of Lions Gate Consulting, Tourism Planning Group, Terra Firma Digital Arts and Phil McIntyre-Paul. Supporting organizations include Destination BC, Recreation Sites and Trails BC, Trans Canada Trail Society, BC Cycling Coalition and Cyclo Touring BC Program.

### Experiences Advisory Committee

The Experiences Advisory Committee played a key advisory role from the outset of the project in 2015 through to its completion in 2016, and TOTA thanks each member for their invaluable contribution and enthusiasm during these months.

*Carol Suhan, Manager, Power Sense Services, Fortis BC*  
*Craig Campbell, Instructor, Adventure Studies, Thompson Rivers University - Adventure Studies*  
*Chris Lewis, Manager, Visitor Sales and Service, Tourism Kelowna*  
*Henry Sielmann, Chair, The Trail of the Okanagans*  
*Hans-Jurgen (Jack) Becker, Director, BC Cycling Coalition / CycloTouringBCProgram*  
*John Hawkings, Director, RSTBC, Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operation*  
*Marsha Morrish, Visitor Services Manager, Tourism Penticton*  
*Robin Lowe-Irwin, Operations Manager, Princeton & District Museum & Archives*  
*Romina Rooney, Account Manager, Green Tourism Canada*  
*Tennessee Trent, Trails Manager, RSTBC, Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operation*  
*Trevor Hanna, Director of Hospitality, Kettle Valley Steakhouse & Wine Bar*  
*Brian McAndrew, President, Vicom Design*  
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*Byron Noble, Owner, Noble Adventures*  
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### TOTA

Project management and oversight was provided by Ellen Walker-Matthews and Simone Carlyle-Smith, with post-draft consultation and early-stage implementation led by Glenn Mandziuk. The latter involved reaching out to local government, stewards, communities and provincial as well as national partners for their feedback and endorsement of the strategy.

### Industry

TOTA wishes to thank the many stakeholders that took the time to attend workshops and to be involved in discussions at various stages. The process was engaging, informative and at times contentious but all agreed that the rail trails system in the Thompson Okanagan was a treasured asset with considerable potential for future use as a transportation, recreation and tourism corridor.

**Letters of Endorsement**

Letters of formal endorsement for the regional rail trails strategy have been received from national, provincial and local organizations representing tourism, government and community interests.

*To be completed*