

Local Trans-Canada Trail link nearly complete

By Ashley Gaudreault - Cowichan News Leader Pictorial
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Regular Cowichan walkers, bikers, hikers and horseback riders probably already know lots about the new neighbourhood trail systems serving as the connector between southern and northern portions of the Cowichan Valley Trail.

But the Cowichan Valley Regional District is cheering the completion of the near-final link of the 120-km pedestrian pathway.

The Kinsol trestle portion in Shawnigan Lake is now the only remaining gap in the Trans-Canada Trail's Cowichan stretch.

A fundraising campaign to raise money to finish restoration on the historical link is ongoing. Thanks to the Ministry of Transportation, Cowichanians can keep an eye on the Kinsol progress from MOT's website, which plays live action pictures of the restoration work crew.

Completed sectors spanning from Lake Cowichan to the Duncan/North Cowichan areas and northward through Ladysmith to the Regional District of Nanaimo have utilized rail and utility corridor routes, which provide gentle grades attractive to walkers, cyclists, and equestrians, a press release reads.

"The Cowichan Valley Trail completion initiative is the single most important development under our regional parks program over the past 10 years," CVRD parks committee chair Mel Dorey said. "We are creating a safe inter-community trail network for the use and enjoyment of residents for walking, running, biking and horseback riding as well as an attractive route for cycle commuters."

Money for the project's been forked out through Western Economic Diversification Canada's Recreational Infrastructure Canada program (\$650,000), the federal Gas Tax fund (\$400,000), Island Coastal Economic Trust (\$743,891) and the CVRD (\$380,000).

Federal authorities predict the trail will boost the region's recreation-tourism industry.

The Cowichan Valley Trail is one of 400 linked trails along the 22,000 kilometres of Trans Canada Trail.

"It's great to see gas tax funds being used to expand alternative transportation choices for the region, helping to improve the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Canada's Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development Stephanie Cadieux said.

Completion of the local links began in September at sections between the old E&N rail grade and Johnston Road and between Somenos Road and the new Cowichan Exhibition Grounds.

In August, an agreement was reached between CVRD parks and trails and Catalyst Paper, which owns the waterline right-of-way in Duncan and North Cowichan.

This allowed CVRD staffers to work on the three-metre wide, multi-use pedestrian pathway."

"When it's all said and done, it will be 120 kilometres in length, and it will connect with the Galloping Goose trail in Victoria and the Trans Canada Trail up at the Nanaimo Regional District," CVRD's parks and trails manager Brian Farquhar said.