



**Splatsin te Secwépemc/Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail (Sicamous-to-Armstrong)
Mara Hall Area – Trailhead Access Management Report**

Updated: June 12, 2023

Prepared by: the SNO Rail Trail Technical Operational Committee

The Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail between Sicamous and Amstrong is within the unceded territory of the Splitsin te Secwépemc Nation who are the Yucwmenlúcwu (caretakers) of this area of responsibility within Secwépemcúlecw (territory).

Overview: This report provides a summary of planning, feedback, and recommendations regarding access management along the Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail within the Mara Hall area (westside of the Rosemond Lake Road Bridge). It has been developed in response to concerns raised by Mara residents regarding potential impacts to the community.

The report is formatted to follow an adaptive approach for planning and managing the rail trail that addresses identified risks and concerns. It is consistent with the approach agreed to by regional partners through the Shuswap Regional Trails Strategy. (See: [Shuswap Regional Trails Strategy](#), Updated Nov 2019) And subsequently adopted by the Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail partner owners (Splitsin te Secwépemc, Columbia Shuswap Regional District, and Regional District of North Okanagan). (See: [SNO Rail Trail Development Plan](#), Jan 2021)

There have been several open houses and opportunities to engage with communities and landowners during the rail trail planning phase (see Appendix A). As a result of feedback received from the open houses, on-site meetings, and correspondence specific to the Mara Hall area, the rail trail joint owners determined a dedicated consultation session was needed.

An information session specifically for residents living in the Mara Hall area was hosted by the Rail Trail partner owners (Splitsin, RDNO, CSR D) on Thursday, February 16, 2023 from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm at the Mara Community Hall. The meeting purpose was to present current rail trail plans, acknowledge specific community concerns, discuss proposed solutions, and provide opportunity to hear community feedback. Written feedback was also invited and received, along with a standing invitation to provide further feedback following the meeting. 48 people signed in at the door for this well attended meeting. (See: [Mara Hall Community Meeting Notes](#), Feb 16, 2023)

Based on the cumulative feedback and discussion to date, the Technical Operational Committee of the Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail have assembled the following summary report of identified values, concerns, and recommendations for access management of the rail trail within the Mara Hall area.

Concerns: Priority concerns identified and discussed by the Mara Hall area residents to date include. . .

- **Congestion and Parking:**
 - Concern was raised regarding potential traffic congestion on the single lane bridge from vehicles going to access the rail trail if trailhead parking is established adjacent to Mara

Hall. Residents might have to wait to get across the bridge to leave. Working farm vehicles may be delayed crossing the bridge.

- Concern was also raised about the capacity to manage both trailhead parking and community hall parking when events are happening. Currently there is already an issue with insufficient parking around the Mara Hall during events. Vehicles park along the roads and block resident driveways.

Discussion Notes:

- Suggestions included establishing a parking area large enough to accommodate both rail trail parking and Mara Hall parking when there is an event on at the Hall, moving the trail parking to a location on the east side of the Mara bridge and having people walk or ride over the bridge to the rail trail, and not having any parking at all to deter people making the Mara Hall area a trailhead access point.
- Suggestions for parking on the east side of the bridge included talking to the Church or a location closer to Hwy 97A. It was noted, however, the south end of Riverside Rd was too far for people walking, so they would likely still drive closer and park. It was also noted that increasing the number of pedestrians and cyclists on the bridge would create a different congestion problem possibly more disruptive to residents trying to drive across the bridge and instead it would be preferable to have vehicles cross the bridge before disembarking to walk or ride the rail trail.
- Another opinion suggested having the trailhead by Mara Hall would increase the need for Ministry of Transportation to consider upkeep of the bridge and its potential future replacement, which would be a positive thing.
- It was noted the limited parking in front of the hall is currently insufficient during community events and additional parking is needed regardless of the trail. Additional parking would be desirable for the Hall but a concern was expressed whether it would be filled with trail users when needed for hall events. Some of the feedback recommended ensuring sufficient parking was developed to accommodate both uses. It was noted there was room within the rail corridor property for additional parking to be developed over time, if it was determined more spaces were needed.
- Selective promotion of trailheads was discussed as a tool to mitigate overuse of the Mara Hall parking area, suggesting the main community centres (Sicamous, Enderby/Splatsin, Armstrong) be targeted in publicity marketing and trailhead signage, and that the Mara Hall location not be advertised or promoted.
- Not creating any parking was also noted as an option but acknowledged it would not address the current issue of people parking or the need for additional hall parking.
- Others recommended a larger parking lot starting south of the hall toward Coell-Jones Road and extending north to the hall to accommodate at least 30 vehicles to accommodate trail users who might stage starting or ending a bicycle ride from Sicamous or Enderby.

- A few comments reflected on the current access of the area by the wider public, including a concern that people sometimes come to jump off the bridge into the river, and whether more parking at the Hall might encourage this behaviour.
- Research/evidence from other managed trailhead parking areas on rail trail greenways around the province (where trailheads are purposely developed and regularly monitored and maintained) suggest the majority of use is respectful, quiet, and compliant to management directions and signage. The evidence continues to affirm that well designed, signed, maintained, promoted greenway trails attract good trail users and displace unwanted behaviours and use.
- It has been noted and observed that vehicle access across from the bridge short cutting over the rail corridor property to Post Office Road is creating a safety hazard for residents due to speed and lack of stopping requirements. Closure of this unauthorized crossing has been recommended to eliminate the problem. Additionally, the rail trail owners do not want to assume the burden, liability, or costs of managing a designated public road crossing.
- **Rosemond Lake Road Access/Use:**
 - Concern was raised that trail users may desire a shorter walking distance to reach Mara and Rosemond Lake and drive to the north end of Rosemond Lake Road to park.
 - Residents at the north end of the road have observed vehicles parked in their driveways already accessing the rail corridor.
 - Concerns included increased impact to the already poorly maintained road surface, traffic congestion for residents and farm equipment delays, and blocked access to farms by parked vehicles.

Discussion Notes:

- This concern was raised during development planning site visits by owners of property adjacent to the rail trail living at the north end of Rosemond Lake Road.
- Development of additional parking within the rail corridor property at the north end of Rosemond Lake Road to mitigate parked vehicles blocking farm access was generally not supported. There was concern this would invite increased parking and access over time.
- Seeking Ministry of Transportation approval to install regulatory signs beyond Mara Hall was a suggestion as part of an adaptive monitoring approach.
- **Trail User Management including Trailhead Facilities, Toilets, Garbage, Noise, and Vandalism**
 - Concerns over potential noise, garbage and vandalism due to the trailhead are addressed in the rail trail development plan as well as a joint management agreement that includes regular monitoring, maintenance, and repairs.
 - Concern was raised on how rail trail users would be made to stay on the trail and not trespass into adjacent properties. The rail trail development plan addresses these concerns through installation of signs, structural features like fencing where needed, use of natural barriers, revegetation, and clear destination anchor points away from

residential areas. (Note: RDNO has not received feedback that this is an issue along the Okanagan Rail Trail where the rail trail is very close to some unfenced residential properties)

- Concern re: potential smells from vault toilets impacting local homes was voiced. Regional parks staff noted this was not an issue with other vault toilet locations they manage adjacent to residences. Regular cleaning, maintenance, inspections, and repairs to trailhead facilities are part of the ongoing maintenance commitment of the rail trail partners.

Discussion Notes:

- Toilet facilities were discussed, noting the current vault toilet standard and that yes, they would also be regularly maintained as with other parks.
 - A suggestion was made that a septic system be installed for a washroom facility. Rail trail technical representatives noted the archaeological requirements for any ground disturbance make enhanced facilities like that more costly and not within the current funding capacity.
 - Recommendation: don't install a toilet facility at the time of trail construction but monitor the situation. A portable toilet could be installed as an interim solution to gauge the demand for a facility as well as any potential issues.
 - Questions included how garbage was going to be managed. TOC reps confirmed the trailhead standard for bear proof bins that would be regularly maintained.
 - Examples from other trails consistently show that well designed, signed, maintained, promoted greenway trails displace unwanted behaviours and use.
- **Motorized Access Management**
 - Concern was raised early by adjacent property owners over motorized access and use of the rail trail corridor.

Discussion Notes:

- acknowledged the efforts to gate, fence, and sign the rail corridor prior to development did help to mitigate earlier issues with motor vehicle use of the undeveloped rail corridor.
 - The trail development plan addresses long-term access management through the installation of access filters, signage, ongoing maintenance, and monitoring.
 - Again, examples from other trails demonstrate high levels of compliance once developed and maintained.
- **Trailhead Beautification/Vegetation/Invasive Management**
 - Concern was noted about the current unmanaged look and feel of the rail corridor adjacent to the Mara Hall.

Discussion Notes:

- Discussion included how the trailhead parking area might help to beautify the Mara Hall area. TOC reps reported on the revegetation and invasive management plans currently being developed for the rail trail, the desire to retain and enhance natural vegetation, ongoing priority invasive weed control, and the opportunity to consider use of vegetation replanting in the Mara Hall trailhead area.
- **Winter Management**
 - Winter was discussed, including the potential to educate trail users to allow for shared x-country ski/walking use. While TOC reps confirmed the trail would not be maintained in winter, supporting communities and trail stewards to self-manage side-by-side etiquette for shared use could be considered. Examples of this already happening in Enderby and at the Sicamous end were discussed. The growing use of Fat Tire bikes was also mentioned. Also, the need for a more organized community level friends-of-trail stewardship organization were mentioned.
- **Agricultural Vehicle Crossings**
 - Concern over the complexity and permanence of the agricultural vehicle and waterline crossing agreements was raised by Mara area property owners adjacent to the rail trail.

Discussion Notes:

- The rail trail owners have responded to these concerns by developing a simplified process that now utilizes a permit under regional district policy and bylaws to affirm and ensure ongoing access for adjacent farms and residents. The permits can be transferred with ownership, and the administrative fee has been eliminated.
- The standard crossing includes safety signage and options for bollards or adjustable baffle gates to address high frequency seasonal harvest crossing needs.
- **Adaptive Planning Approach**
 - The adaptive approach being taken to develop and manage the rail trail was discussed. It was generally appreciated the rail trail owners were willing to work with local communities to monitor results of the initial constructed rail trail and trailheads and make changes if undesired results were experienced.
 - The question was raised, however, what the plan is if there IS a problem? and how fast can it be fixed? TOC staff spoke realistically about the limits of local government and that things often take time. There are a couple of mitigating factors that should help provide some room to react to any issues: It will likely take some time for the trail to become more popular once constructed. As well, the peak season is expected to be relatively short (June-August), which helps to limit the impact of any negative behaviours.
 - It was asked whether a plan could be in place in advance so everyone knew what will be done if things are not working? (This is addressed below in this report.)

- It was also noted that once the wider public knows and is using the trailhead it may become harder to reverse the already established precedent of use. Again, this was held up as a good example of why taking an adaptive approach and starting smaller rather than overdeveloping would be the reasonable approach.
- The following recommendations essentially outline an adaptive plan specifically to address trail access management in the Mara Hall area.

Proposed Adaptive Plan for Trail Access Management in the Mara Hall Area

Adaptive Management Planning is a structured process used to guide land management decision-making where the outcome of an action or actions on an ecosystem (or other values) is uncertain. It includes setting limits of acceptable change, ongoing monitoring and adaptive responses over time.

Indicators and acceptable limits of change in the rail trail long-term management plan are used to monitor environmental, cultural, agricultural, and social concerns identified during development planning. Appropriate corrective action is taken when identified limits are passed. Corrective adaptation can include actions such as increased education, signage, barriers to movement, bylaw presence, technical solutions, policy changes, closures, or other means.

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Adjacent landowners and the public report issues directly to the Splatshin te Secwépemc, CSR and RDNO (the Rail Trail Owners), and a Management and Maintenance Plan outlines measures, limits, monitoring, and potential corrective actions. (See: [SNO Rail Trail Maintenance Standards](#), Feb. 2022)

Principles

The following principles are foundational to adaptive management plans:

- All land management decisions result in some level of impact (which may be positive or negative).
- Determining whether impacts are within acceptable limits is a challenge for managers and decision makers.
- Assessments of risks and significance of impacts provide managers and decision makers with tools to make the best decisions.
- Predicting impacts and determining the significance of impacts should be as objective and quantifiable as possible.

- Research, legislation, guidelines and best management practices provide the primary direction for determining acceptable limits of impact.
- Determining whether impacts are acceptable is based on both research and values and therefore always entails some level of subjectivity or compromise.
- For many of these decisions, public involvement is essential to determine values and their significance, understand the trade-offs or compromises that will result, and build support for the decision.

The logic and language of the adaptive management plan includes the following components:

- Results – What the adaptive management plan is attempting to achieve.
- Desired Behaviours – Actions by users that are most likely to achieve the specified results.
- Indicators – What should be measured to determine if the results are being achieved.
- Limits – Acceptable bounds related to the measured indicator.
- Mitigation Measures – Strategies to achieve the desired behaviours.
- Monitoring Schedule – Frequency and timing of monitoring indicators.
- Corrective Actions – Actions triggered if monitoring suggests that indicators have exceeded acceptable limits.

The following adaptive plan is proposed for trail access management in the Mara Hall area.

Results: The results are what the adaptive management plan is attempting to achieve. Based on the concerns identified, the following results have been identified as important for rail trail access management in the Mara Hall area. . .

- Maintains the quiet rural character of the area
- Avoids undesired impacts to area residents (noise, smells, property damage)
- Provides a healthy outdoor recreational asset for the community
- Reduces parking congestion during community events at the Mara Hall
- Maintains unimpeded farm operations along roads and across the bridge
- Ensures the ongoing safety of area residents using local roads and the bridge
- Limits increased wear and maintenance on rural road surfaces

Desired Behaviours: These are the actions by rail trail users, the owners (Splatsin, RDNO, CSR), and residents that are most likely to achieve the results identified above.

- Quiet and respectful use of the rail trail corridor

- Utilizing appropriate facilities (toilets, waste containers)
- Regular maintenance of facilities (toilets, waste containers, fencing, signs)
- Parking in designated trailhead parking areas to access the trail.
- Development of sufficient parking to accommodate Mara Hall events.
- Adherence to posted speed limits and road safety laws.
- Rail Trail access limited to designated trailhead parking.

Indicators: What should be measured to determine if the results are being achieved?

- Observed quiet and respectful use of the rail trail corridor (conversational voice levels and daytime use does not impact daily routines and nighttime sleep of residents)
- Signs of waste outside of appropriate facilities.
- Reports of smells from trailhead toilet facilities.
- Signs of damage and disrepair of facilities.
- Observed compliance to parking in designated trailhead parking areas.
- Availability of parking during Mara Hall events.
- Observed compliance to posted speed limits and road safety laws.

Limits: Acceptable bounds related to the measured indicator. (Also see Corrective Actions below.)

- Repeated pattern of disruptive noise, particularly at night during sleeping hours (percussive, repetitive, persistent, or disruptive noises or shouting)
- Persistent waste debris observed outside of appropriate facilities.
- Repeated incidence of smells impacting adjacent residence from trailhead toilet facilities.
- Persistent damage or disrepair of facilities.
- Repeated incidents of vehicles parked outside of designated trailhead parking areas.
- Repeated congestion from parking during Mara Hall events.
- Repeated incidents of vehicles obstructing regular movement of local vehicles and farm equipment on roads.

Mitigation Options: Strategies to achieve the desired behaviours.

Several different options have been variously proposed to mitigate the concerns identified by Mara Hall area residents. Each brings the potential for both benefits and risks. Following is a brief summary of potential options that were proposed and the potential effects/results/risks for each option.

Effects/results/risks are organized sequentially to align with the results/behaviours/limits identified above summarized into four key value categories:

- a) Maintaining quiet rural character
- b) Healthy outdoor recreation opportunities
- c) Reducing parking congestion at Mara Hall
- d) Maintaining local road access and safety

Option:	Potential effects/results/risks:
No trailhead at Mara Hall and no Public Access Encouraged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Potentially fewer visitors/vehicles around Mara Hall; potentially less noise/disturbance b) No formal access path to rail trail at Mara Hall; No toilets or waste receptacles for local use or regular maintenance presence by rail trail personnel; potential for unmanaged garbage/waste c) Mara Hall event parking congestion remains unresolved, Potential for unmanaged visitor parking along roadsides. d) Potentially fewer non-compliant vehicles beyond Mara Hall
No trailhead at Mara Hall but Public Access Encouraged on foot/bicycle from east side of Mara River Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Potentially fewer vehicles around Mara Hall; potentially less noise/disturbance b) Formal access path onto rail trail at Mara Hall; No toilets or waste receptacles for local use or regular maintenance presence by rail trail personnel; potential for unmanaged garbage/waste c) Walking distance to rail trail may result in vehicles still crossing bridge and utilizing roadside for trail access parking. d) Increased pedestrian and bicycle use of Mara Lake bridge may result in longer periods of congestion when crossing and safety concerns with foot / bike traffic over the narrow bridge.
Trailhead Parking Area established at Mara Hall, but not promoted to wider public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Limited visitors/vehicles in Mara Hall area; potentially less noise/disturbance b) Formal access path onto rail trail at Mara Hall with accompanying trailhead amenities; regular maintenance presence by rail trail personnel; managed garbage/waste c) Visitor trail access parking managed, off roadsides; Potentially improved capacity for Mara Hall event parking. d) Less potential delays crossing bridge; but potential for increase in visitors/vehicles over time
Trailhead Parking Area established at Mara Hall and promoted to wider public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increased number of visitors/vehicles in Mara Hall area; potentially more noise/disturbance b) Formal access path onto rail trail at Mara Hall with accompanying trailhead amenities; regular maintenance presence by rail trail personnel; managed garbage/waste c) Potentially larger initial visitor trail access parking required, and higher uncertainty initially for Mara Hall event parking capacity d) Potentially more delays crossing bridge; potential for non-compliant vehicles beyond Mara Hall.

Mitigation Actions: Recommended Option – The Rail Trail Technical Operational Committee (TOC), in reviewing the planning, feedback, discussion, examples from other trails, and weighing the potential effects, results, and risks of each option are making the following recommendations for trail access management in the Mara Hall area:

- **Work with Mara Hall Directors to create a parking area that works for both the rail trail and the Mara Hall.** (Note: parking on east side of bridge is not considered feasible – no RDNO owned

property available or suitably close enough, no pedestrian path on bridge, rail trail property already owned & available)

- **Develop initial parking to accommodate 30 vehicles** across from Mara Hall but be prepared to increase this, or establish a separate area for dedicated hall parking, if more parking is required during community events at the hall over time.
- **Limit advertising or promoting the Mara Hall parking and trail access in marketing and trailhead signage.** Publicity will primarily focus on the main community centres (Sicamous, Enderby/Splatsin, and Armstrong) and designated destination points other than Mara Hall.
- **Monitor and request approval for roadside signage if necessary,** from Ministry of Transportation to deter parking north on Rosemond Lake Road and south on Coell Jones Road.
- **Install signs, structural features (fencing), natural barriers (rock boulders, vegetation and landscaping)** to direct trail users to designated parking and keep trail users on trail.
- **Install and maintain access filters and signage at all road crossings and trailheads** to ensure trail access is limited to pedestrian and bicycle use. Motorized access is limited to maintenance and repair vehicles only.
- **Close off the unauthorized vehicle access** across from the bridge to eliminate current safety concerns from drive through traffic.
- **Don't install a permanent pit toilet facility at the time of trail construction.** The need for such a facility could be monitored or alternatively a portable toilet should be installed first to gauge the need for such a facility as well as any negative behaviours.
- **Implement the joint maintenance agreement** to regularly manage toilet and waste facilities and address unwanted noise, garbage, vandalism, and smells.
- **Monitor for desired results,** as described above, and where undesired limits are reached corrective actions will be determined and taken. This may include the addition of parking spaces to better meet the needs of the community during events at Mara Hall.
- **Regarding a Traffic Impact Study:** During community consultation feedback it was proposed a traffic impact study be conducted for the Mara Hall area to determine the scale of potential impacts from increased vehicle traffic. The TOC believe the mitigation recommendations in this report provide sufficient room to monitor results and behaviours during trail construction over the next 3 years, and make corrections as needed while proceeding with the trailhead access development as proposed. Implementing further study has been identified as a corrective option should identified indicators warrant further response.

Monitoring Plan & Schedule: Method, frequency and timing for monitoring indicators. For the Mara Hall trailhead parking area, the following monitoring mechanisms are proposed:

- **Inspection of identified indicators** during regular rail trail inspections and maintenance (See schedule: [Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail Maintenance Standards](#), February 22, 2022)
- **Resident reports** to rail trail owners (c/o RDNO at 250-550-3700; email: CommunityServices@rdno.ca)
- **Collection of Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure maintenance reports** related to relevant indicators (road use, impact, safety) compared to previous annual records.
- **Annual review and assessment of monitoring data** by the SNO Rail Trail Technical Operational Committee to determine if corrective response is warranted.

Corrective Actions: These are actions which may be triggered if monitoring suggests that indicators have exceeded limits.

It is proposed that all reports of non-compliance to identified limits (see above) be responded to in a way appropriate to the specific incident. This may include further follow-up with area residents, on-site inspections, public education, clean-up and maintenance, repairs, signage, temporary closures, and reporting to appropriate authorities including the RCMP.

For locations where there is a trend of non-compliant behaviours, staff will monitor and include recommendations for enhancement of service levels during annual budget deliberations.

Determination of appropriate corrective response by the rail trail owner's Technical Operational Committee will include consultation with Mara Hall area residents through the Mara Hall Association.

Corrective actions may include:

- Education & publicity campaigns
- Improved or alternative signage
- Redesign or alterations to trailhead parking facilities.
- Further community consultation to determine alternative solutions.
- Expand parking capacity and/or establish a separate area for dedicated hall parking, if more parking is required during community events.
- Restrictions (temporary and/or permanent) to trailhead parking access.
- Closures (temporary and/or permanent) to trailhead parking access.
- Implementation of a community impact study to provide further information to support decision-making.
- Enforcement action (Bylaw / RCMP) depending on the type of incident, when necessary



References:

- [Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail Development Plan](#) (January 15, 2021)
- [Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail Maintenance Standards](#) (February 22, 2022)
- [Shuswap North Okanagan Rail Trail Amenities & Sign Standards](#) (November 08, 2022)

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Appendix A. Summary of Previous Engagement

Consultation to Date: During the rail trail development planning phase (2019 – 2021) five public open houses and three open houses for landowners with property in the Agricultural Land Reserve adjacent to or potentially affected by the trail were held. As well, in person on-site meetings were held with individual property owners who requested it. Residents from the Mara Hall area participated in these open houses and on-site meetings.

Six communication mailings to individuals owning property adjacent to the rail trial corridor and within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) have been sent out to date. This included invitation to provide feedback directly to the rail trail joint owners (Splatsin, RDNO, CSR D) and through the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) as part of a required review process.

A fourth open house meeting with agricultural property owners was hosted at the Township of Spallumcheen town hall on June 30, 2022, in response to further feedback received regarding terms of the proposed crossing agreements for vehicles and waterlines.

Additionally, online, email, and phone communications have been received and responded to.

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