CITY OF NANAIMO

BUSINESS CASE – Park Operations Department: Maintenance Worker, Trails

CURRENT OVERVIEW

Parks Operations is responsible for the care, maintenance, and stewardship of more than 1,000 hectares of parkland and an expanding network of nearly 200 kilometres of trails. This extensive system includes soft and hard surface trails, the waterfront walkway, bridges, boardwalks, stairways, beach accesses, drainage infrastructure, and other park and trails assets and amenities. These assets require regular inspection, maintenance, repair, and renewal to ensure they remain safe, accessible, and enjoyable for residents and visitors.

The Trails Unit within Parks Operations is responsible for the construction, maintenance, repair, and replacement of park trail and walkway infrastructure and associated structures across the city. Despite the size and growing complexity of the trail network and associated assets, the unit currently consists of one Supervisor, two Equipment Operators, and one Maintenance Worker.

City Plan: Nanaimo ReImagined

Through the ReImagine Nanaimo process and previous Parks, Recreation and Culture master planning initiatives, residents have consistently identified Nanaimo's parks, trails, and natural environment as important community strengths and areas of satisfaction. Improved trail connections and expansion of the trail network have also been identified as priorities for the future.

At the same time, residents identified concerns related to gaps in the trail network, trail maintenance and upkeep, equitable access and use, and the availability of a diverse range of trail experiences. Maintaining and enhancing the existing trail network is therefore an important component of supporting the community's long-term priorities for parks, recreation, accessibility, and connectivity.

BUSINESS ISSUE

The City's trail network requires ongoing inspections, maintenance, and repairs to support public safety, accessibility, and expected service levels. These responsibilities make up a significant portion of the current Maintenance Worker's workload. As the trail network has expanded, staffing capacity has not increased at the same pace as the associated inspection and maintenance requirements.

As a result, existing resources are largely focused on essential activities such as mowing and trimming, hazard mitigation, and responding to public safety complaints. While these activities are necessary to maintain core service levels, limited capacity remains for preventative maintenance, asset rehabilitation, and longer-term renewal work.

Limited staffing also affects the frequency and timeliness of inspections and the ability to proactively identify and address emerging maintenance issues. When required maintenance cannot be completed in a timely manner, trail and park assets may need to remain closed for longer periods, impacting public access and service levels and potentially increasing public complaints.

As additional trail infrastructure is added to the City's inventory, the associated inspection, maintenance, and renewal requirements also increase. Additional capacity is required to maintain existing service levels while effectively managing both existing and newly added assets.

Recent projects and developments that have added to the City's inventory of trail assets requiring ongoing inspection and maintenance include:

- **E&N Trail Expansion South** – New recreational trail sections between Hecate and 7th Street and Junction Avenue to Extension Road, completed in 2026, totaling 3 kms.
- **Westwood Lake** – Continued expansion of the multi-use trail network, including mountain bike connections between Mount Benson Regional Park and Westwood Lake trailheads including the 1.1 kms Three Bears Mountain Bike flow trail created in 2026.
- **Lotus Pinnatus** – 1.2 kms of new trails completed in 2025/2026 to direct visitor use away from environmentally sensitive areas.
- **933 Park Avenue** – A new trail connection constructed in 2026 linking the site to surrounding neighborhoods with future expansion planned.
- **Harewood Centennial Park** – New trail connections completed in 2026 linking the surrounding neighborhood to the park through John Barsby School and Bruce Avenue and connecting to the Georgia Greenway, while also supporting protection of the Chase River riparian area.
- **Developer-Built Trail Assets** – New trails constructed through development projects that require ongoing City inspection and maintenance, including Rosstown (Quill/Sparrow), North Slope (Sheridan Ridge), Westwood (Neen Road), Rutherford (Molecy Creek Park and Nelson Woods), and the Hospital area connection to Beaufort Park.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Adding a second dedicated Trails Maintenance Worker would provide additional capacity within Parks Operations to support the City's existing and growing trail network. The additional position would enable the Trails Unit to take a more proactive approach to maintenance, improve the frequency and timeliness of inspections, reduce service disruptions, and increase capacity for trail repair, rehabilitation, and renewal.

The additional capacity is anticipated to:

- Increase the frequency and timeliness of trail and infrastructure inspections.
- Increase capacity for preventative maintenance and proactive asset management, reducing reliance on reactive maintenance.
- Improve the ability to identify and address maintenance and safety concerns before they result in more significant repairs or service disruptions.
- Reduce the duration and frequency of trail and infrastructure closures resulting from maintenance and safety concerns.
- Allow Equipment Operators and other skilled staff to focus more consistently on the primary responsibilities of their positions rather than routine inspection and manual maintenance activities.
- Provide additional capacity to maintain new trail infrastructure as it is added to the City's inventory.

- Support the ongoing protection and renewal of the City's investment in trail infrastructure.
- Help maintain safe, accessible, and reliable trail infrastructure for residents and visitors.

Overall, the additional position would improve the sustainability and resilience of trail maintenance operations and help ensure maintenance capacity keeps pace with the continued expansion of Nanaimo's parks and trail network.

OPTIONS

Option #1 – Add a Maintenance Worker, Trails Position

Create a permanent full-time Maintenance Worker, Trails position reporting to the Supervisor, Trails.

Benefits:

- Increases staffing capacity to support the maintenance and inspection requirements of the City's existing and growing trail network.
- Supports a more proactive approach to trail inspections, preventative maintenance, repair, and asset rehabilitation.
- Improves operational efficiency by reducing the need for Equipment Operators and other skilled staff to undertake routine inspection and manual maintenance activities.
- Improves the ability to identify and address maintenance concerns before they result in more significant repairs or service disruptions.
- Reduces the potential for prolonged trail and infrastructure closures resulting from maintenance and safety concerns.
- Provides additional capacity to maintain and inspect new trail assets as they are added to the City's inventory.
- Supports the trail maintenance, accessibility, and connectivity objectives identified through the City Plan and ReImagine Nanaimo.

Weaknesses:

- Permanent increase to the operating budget.
- Requires an upfront capital investment for an additional fleet vehicle, tools, and equipment.

Financial Analysis:

- The position will be at a pay level 7 with total wages and benefits based on a start date of April 1, 2027 estimated at $88,400. The 2028 budget impact for wages and benefits is estimated to be $122,700.
- Additional operating costs are projected to be $34,900 in 2027 and $40,800 in 2028 for employment expenses, cell phone charges, additional materials and supplies, and operating costs for a new fleet vehicle.
- One-time costs upon the creation of this position are estimated to be $88,000 for the purchase of a phone, tools, and a new fleet vehicle.
- The estimated 2027 property tax impact is 0.12%.

Option# 2 – Status Quo
Continue with the current organizational structure and staffing complement.

Benefits:

- No increase to operating budget.
- No upfront capital investment for an additional fleet vehicle, tools, or equipment.

Weaknesses:

- Continued reliance on reactive maintenance, with limited capacity for preventative maintenance and proactive asset management.
- Limited capacity to increase the frequency and timeliness of trail and infrastructure inspections.
- Greater potential for extended trail or infrastructure closures where maintenance or safety concerns cannot be addressed promptly.
- Continued reliance on Equipment Operators and other skilled staff to support routine inspections and manual maintenance activities, reducing capacity for their primary responsibilities.
- No additional staffing capacity to accommodate inspection and maintenance requirements as new trail infrastructure is added to the City's inventory.
- Limited ability to improve trail maintenance service levels or respond to the maintenance-related priorities identified through the City Plan: Nanaimo ReImagined.

RECOMMENDATION
Option #1 is recommended.