

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

Parks and Trails Master Plan

For Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)

Engagement Summary

Prepared for:



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LEES
+
ASSOCIATES

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) is developing a Parks and Trails Master Plan for Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural). This plan will create a strategy and plan of action for parks and trails that reflects the unique character, culture, and geography of the region.

Community input is key to the success of this initiative. To make sure that the Plan reflects a community vision and a wide range of perspectives, consultation included outreach to the public and key rights and interest-holders including outdoor clubs, community groups, and Indigenous communities. Consultation with BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC), local governments, and organizations was also completed to coordinate efforts and build on existing infrastructure and service offerings.

The engagement program took place in two rounds which provided participants an opportunity to shape the vision and priorities for parks and trails in the area, then provide feedback on the Draft Master Plan before the final revision.

Round 1 engagement included stakeholder meetings, stakeholder interviews, a public online survey, and a public pop-up event. Round 2 engagement included a public online survey, and a virtual public open house. The details of these activities are described below, and the results are summarized in this report.

1.2 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

The RDBN invited fifteen First Nations that have identified as having consultation areas within the RDBN's Electoral Area C to participate in individual rights holder meetings, as well as extending the invitation to participate in the public pop-ups and online surveys. There have been no requests for meetings to date.

The RDBN is committed to fostering robust relationships with local First Nations and acknowledges the significance of considering their interests and values. This includes the protection of culturally significant areas within the parks system. As further input is offered in the future, it will be integrated into the decision-making process.

1.3 OVERALL PLANNING PROCESS

The Parks and Trails Master Plan process includes the following five phases. This Engagement Summary summarizes feedback received during Phase 2 and 4 of the planning process, and two rounds of community engagement (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The project timeline for the Parks and Trails Master Plan.

2 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2.1 PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The first round of engagement, held in late summer 2025, asked stakeholders, rightsholders, potential partners, and the public to share how parks, trails, and recreation areas are meeting their needs in Electoral Area C. This round also identified key challenges and opportunities for the provision and operation of parks and trails, as well as potential strategies to improve partnership and coordination. The feedback from the first round of engagement helped gather information on any potential gaps and identified future needs. Engagement also informed the vision, goals, and recommendations presented in the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan.

The second round of engagement, held in early spring of 2026, asked the community to confirm the draft vision and goals and provide feedback on key recommendations in the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan. The engagement results were considered in the refinement of the vision, goals, and recommendations in the Final Parks and Trails Master Plan, as well as setting priorities and timelines for the implementation plan.

2.2 OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION

Public consultation activities included three virtual interest-holder workshops, two online public surveys, one virtual open house, and a community pop-up event. Further details about each activity are provided below, and a summary of the results is included in this report.

A combination of phone calls, email invitations, newspaper ads, and social media posts was used to encourage participation in this engagement series. The RDBN website served as a central hub for all updates, information on how to participate, and a link to the online surveys.

Engagement by the Numbers

183 participants in two online surveys

9 participants in the community workshops

1 virtual open house

1 pop-up event at the Fort St. James Night Market

2.3 ROUND 1 ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

2.3.1 INTEREST-HOLDER WORKSHOPS

In fall of 2025, three virtual workshops were held in Round 1 with interest-holders, including local and provincial government representatives, community organizations, and school representatives. At the time of the workshops, a BC Government Employees Union strike delayed engagement with staff of provincial agencies. Interviews with individual knowledge holders were also conducted. Participants included representatives from:

- Elected officials from RDBN Electoral Area 'C'
- Elected officials from District of Fort St. James
- Fire Smart
- BC Parks
- Stuart Lake Nordic Society
- Stuart Lake Seniors Association
- Fort St. James Snowmobile Club
- Fort St. James Dog Sled Association
- Fort St. James Secondary School
- Murray Ridge Ski Area

Workshops involved a brief presentation on the project and a discussion about the current state of parks and trails in the region, challenges faced by interest-holders, and opportunities to improve outdoor recreation amenities in Electoral Area C.

2.3.2 ROUND 1 ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

Public input was gathered through an online survey posted on the Regional District's website. The results were collected through the online platform Survey Monkey and are summarized in Section 3.1 of this report.

Round 1 - Survey responses from the first round engagement were collected from August 15th to September 30th, 2025, with a total of 107 responses. Survey questions asked the community to reflect on needs and aspirations for parks, trails, and recreation. Questions aimed to understand:

- The most popular trails and outdoor activities for the community and children specifically
- The frequency of trail use
- Barriers for visiting parks and using trails
- Key destinations visited
- Main priorities for parks, trails, and active transportation
- Level of support for tax increases
- Any additional comments

2.3.3 ROUND 1 PUBLIC POP-UP EVENT

One in-person pop-up event was held at the Fort St. James Night Market at Caledonia Days on August 15th, 2025, from 4:00-8:00pm. Facilitators from the Regional District and LEES were present to gather feedback, guide conversation, and answer questions.

The pop-up event introduced the project to the community and provided information about parks and trails planning in the area. Display boards prompted participants to share their vision for parks and trails, identify key locations they would like to see prioritized, and share what features and amenities were most important. The pop-up also encouraged participation in the online survey.

The following questions were asked on the display boards:

- What areas should be prioritized for future parks and trails?
- What features and amenities would you like to see in Regional District parks?
- What features and amenities would you like to see in Regional District trails?
- Over the next 10 years, what are the most important priorities for parks and trails?
- What is your vision for the future of parks and trails in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)?

2.4 ROUND 2 ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

2.4.1 ROUND 2 ONLINE SURVEY

Survey responses for round 2 engagement were collected from February 16th to March 23rd, 2026, with a total of 76 responses. Survey questions asked for community input on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan. Questions aimed to understand:

- Level of support and missing information for the draft vision and five goals
- Level of support for forming a parks and trails working group
- Interest in the formation of hiking and mountain biking organization
- Top priorities for increasing access and improvements to outdoor recreation
- Top priority for creating a roadside trail connection
- Any additional comments

2.4.2 VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

In February of 2026, a virtual open house was held. The event was open to all members of the community and was promoted via the RDBN's website, social media posts, newspaper ads, and through direct emails to interest-holders. The open house included a presentation on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan with an opportunity for questions and comments from those attending. Information presented included the following:

- Overview of the project
- The role of the RDBN in supporting parks and trails
- The current state of parks and trails
- Key demographics and service providers
- Opportunities for parks and trails
- Key findings from community engagement in round 1
- The draft vision, goals, and recommendations

The presentation of the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan was also recorded and posted to the RDBN's website for viewing by those who could not attend.

3 ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

3.1 ROUND 1 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

3.1.1 INTEREST-HOLDER WORKSHOPS

(1) Elected Officials

- Land acquisition at Stuart Lake is under consideration to support a water access campsite and campsite improvements. There is potential for the establishment of a circuit that is proposed to tie into BC Parks and other sites.
- While trails are informally managed by community groups, the lack of formal leadership presents challenges for coordination. Volunteers contribute considerably to the trail system but have limited capacity to take on additional responsibilities.
- Some trails are located within FireSmart fuel treatment areas, and there may be a synergy between fuel management and trails establishment and maintenance.
- Pedestrian safety and active transportation was raised as a priority.

(2) BC Parks

- Limited staffing was identified as a challenge.
- There is a desire to improve connections between user groups and volunteers.
- An outhouse at Mt. Pope has been requested by the community.
- The climbing trailhead parking is at capacity.
- Improving partnership with the RDBN would help coordinate signage and promote trail improvements.
- There is an opportunity to work with the Nak'azdli to improve the Grease Trail by joining McLeod Lake with a section of Carp Lake.

(3) Community Organizations

- The Seniors Association would benefit from improved safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians along Sowchea Road.
- Community organizations expressed that volunteer capacity, risk and liability, and securing access to trail areas that intersect with private property are key challenges.
- It was noted that there is no walking trail on the bridge crossing the Stuart River. However, Necoslie River has a good walking trail on the bridge.
- Improvements for walking and cycling from Sowchea Road into Fort St. James were identified as a priority.
- The Graveyard Trails are well-loved, but are located on Crown, private and BC Parks land.

- The need for improved bike safety to protect cyclists commuting around the town from industrial traffic was expressed.
- There are opportunities for a trail from the subdivision north of town along the old railway bed and gas line to town. People currently bike on the highway.
- Protection of boat launches and water access is a priority. Boat launches on Stuart Lake are in place at Paarens Beach, Sowchea Bay, and Big Bay.
- Additional parking near Stuart Lake for vehicles and boat trailers was requested.
- Snowmobile trails would benefit from wheelchair access, picnic tables, and an outhouse.
- The Nordic Club faces challenges as a few key volunteers are responsible for trail maintenance. They would like to offer trails closer to town, and on Stuart Lake.
- Access to the lake around Mt. Pope was identified as a challenge, especially for canoes and kayaks.
- The Nordic trail would benefit from the burial of overhead electrical lines, which are frequently impacted by tree blowdown.
- **Key Locations shared:**
 - Stuart Lake
 - Necoslie River
 - Graveyard trails
 - Paarens Beach
 - Big Bay
 - Mt. Dickinson
 - Nyan Wheti Trail, south of Fort St. James
 - Sowchea Road connection to Fort St. James, including improvements to the Highway 27 bridge over the Stuart River
 - Mount Pope

3.1.2 ROUND 1 PUBLIC POP-UP EVENT

- The Graveyard Trails were frequently mentioned as being well used but under-developed.
- Traditional First Nations travel routes were mentioned as an opportunity for developing long-range and inter-regional trails. Routes mentioned spanned from Takla to Fort Babine, Fort St James to McLeod Lake, and Fraser Lake to Stuart Lake.
- The Mt. Pope trails and climbing routes were described as well-used but in need of additional infrastructure such as pit toilets.
- Participants expressed a need for additional formal boat launches on Stuart Lake.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the decommissioning of Forestry Service Roads, which are regularly used for recreation (hiking, ATVing, etc.) and access to wilderness areas.

3.1.3 ROUND 1 ONLINE SURVEY

The following key findings shared in the round 1 online survey include:

- **Trail use** – More than three quarters of respondents use trails at least weekly, most often for hiking, walking for exercise, or dog walking, with winter activities also popular. For children, the most common activities are hiking, ATV/snowmobiling, cycling, dog walking, and mountain biking.
- **Diverse recreation opportunities** – The most popular outdoor recreation activities were water-based including swimming and visiting lakes and beaches. Children most commonly went camping, swimming/going to the lake, and downhill skiing. Respondents also particularly valued camping, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing.
- **Barriers to park and trail access** – Roughly one-third of respondents do not face barriers to accessing parks and trails within the Service Area. Those who did most commonly listed barriers including poor maintenance, limited time, and a lack of information.
- **Key trail destinations** – Mount Pope was overwhelmingly the most commonly mentioned destination. Stuart River, Murray Ridge, and Sowchea Bay were also popular mentions.
- **Parks and trail planning priorities** – Respondents would like to see the RDBN prioritize the creation and management of a new trails network over the next ten years. They would also like to prioritize the creation of connections between communities and key destinations.
- **Recreation priorities** - They would also like to see more opportunities to be active, specifically hiking and walking as a main priority which could include improved trail signage identified as a priority.
- **Tax increases** - Most respondents were supportive of tax increases to fund parks and trails.

3.2 ROUND 2 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

3.2.1 ROUND 2 VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

The following input was shared during the virtual open house, including:

- **Mount Pope challenges**
 - Desire for toilets at the Mount Pope trailhead to accommodate a large volume of people.
 - Concern over fire risk from a blowdown was noted.
 - BC Parks has conducted a trail assessment but noted a challenge of maintaining trails without a formalized biking group.
- **Access road potential** – A proposed mine development in the area has potential to open up access to FSR routes.
- **Trail organization limitations** – Establishing a shared trail organization may be a challenge, as local residents currently maintain trails on an as-needed basis. However, a potential

opportunity was identified to hire an individual to manage trails at the north end of Takla Lake.

- **Active transportation priorities** – Top priorities to improve safety along Sowchea and Necoslie Road.

3.2.2 ROUND 2 ONLINE SURVEY

The following key findings shared in the round 2 online survey include:

- **Vision and goals** - Respondents support the draft vision and five goals overall.
- **Strengthen relationship with local First Nations** – Survey respondents noted they would like to see local First Nations recognized in the vision statement. Multiple comments stressing the importance of meaningful collaboration with Nak’zadli and Dakelh peoples and concern over the lack of involvement in developing the Plan.
- **Parks and Trails Working Group** – Survey respondents shared support for the formation of a Parks and Trails Working Group by the RDBN. Respondents would like to ensure local First Nations are involved throughout the process and an acknowledgement of the limitations that may hinder long-term growth, such as capacity concerns.
- **Forming a hiking or biking organization** – There is a strong desire and support from community to form a hiking and mountain biking organization, with more frequent mentions of a hiking group. A few respondents are interested in taking the lead but many noted limitations due to capacity and time but interest in participating. There is also a desire to support the existing organizations and acknowledgment of the work that unofficial groups have done on the trails.
- **Improvements to access** - Respondents would like to prioritize access to the Mount Pope trails, T-caves climbing area, as well as year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road.
- **Trail upgrades** - Respondents would like to prioritize trail and trailhead upgrades to be more accessible, and adding new support amenities, like pit toilets. They would also like to reuse and revitalize unmaintained spaces (e.g. former forestry campsites, cultural, and historically significant locations).
- **Roadside trail connections** – Throughout engagement, the community shared a strong desire for safer trail connections in town and from the rural area to town. Participants were asked to prioritize roadside trail connections up for consideration by the RDBN. All three segments, including Sowchea Road to Fort St. James, Airport Road to Fort St. James, and Fort St. James to Mount Pope were generally ranked equally with a slight preference for the segment along Sowchea Road into Fort St. James, including bridge improvements.

3.2.3 ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK RECEIVED

The RDBN received additional feedback through email messages including:

- **BC Parks** – Provided updates on BC park locations, associated area measurements, and feedback on recommendations pertaining to lands under jurisdiction. They also shared challenges, including need for a formal bike organization and challenge with accessing the Mount Pope climbing area due to private access.
- **Fort St. James** – Provided feedback and updates regarding provided park amenities.
- **Anonymous** - Shared feedback on formatting and readability of the Master Plan as well as clarification on boat launches provided on RSTBC sites.



4 SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Section four summarizes key themes from round 1 and 2 of engagement, including challenges, opportunities, and priorities identified from workshops, surveys, the in-person pop-up event, and the virtual open house.

4.1 CHALLENGES

Key challenges identified include:

- **Volunteer capacity** - A limited capacity, aging group of volunteers, and informal maintenance limits regular maintenance, increases concerns with risk and liability, and minimizes opportunities to secure trail access across private lands.
- **Safety on roads** - A lack of safe and accessible walking and cycling connections in and around Fort St. James trails is of particular concern along busy roadways.
- **Resource access** - Difficulties accessing resources from other levels of government outside of the RDBN and a lack of information limit ongoing trail maintenance.
- **Wildfire risk** - A growing risk of wildfire continues to place pressures on existing recreation areas.

4.2 OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities were also identified and include:

- **Trail networks** - Formalizing and improving existing trail networks, particularly the Graveyard Trails and ensuring access as development occurs nearby.
- **Trail connections** - Establishing a continuous trail connection from Sowchea Bay Road to Fort St. James and onward to the Graveyard Trails and Mount Pope Provincial Park.
- **Winter access** - Providing additional winter trail access to expand cross-country skiing opportunities, especially closer to town.
- **Lake access** - Increasing access to lakes by improving boat launches and parking.
- **Accessible trails** - Improving trail accessibility, wayfinding, signage and comfort amenities across existing trails.
- **Funding** - Securing funding to support existing and new local recreation organizations.
- **New organizations** - Forming a hiking or biking organization.
- **Working group** - Establishing a Parks and Trails working group.

4.3 SUPPORT FOR THE PLAN

Overall, there was strong support for the Parks and Trails Master Plan, including:

- **89%** of online survey respondents supportive or very supportive of the Vision.
- **88%** of online survey respondents supportive or very supportive of the Goals.
- Support expressed by those attending the **virtual open house** presentation of the Draft Master Plan.
- Organizational support from **BC Parks and the District of Fort St. James** through feedback received.

4.4 PRIORITIES

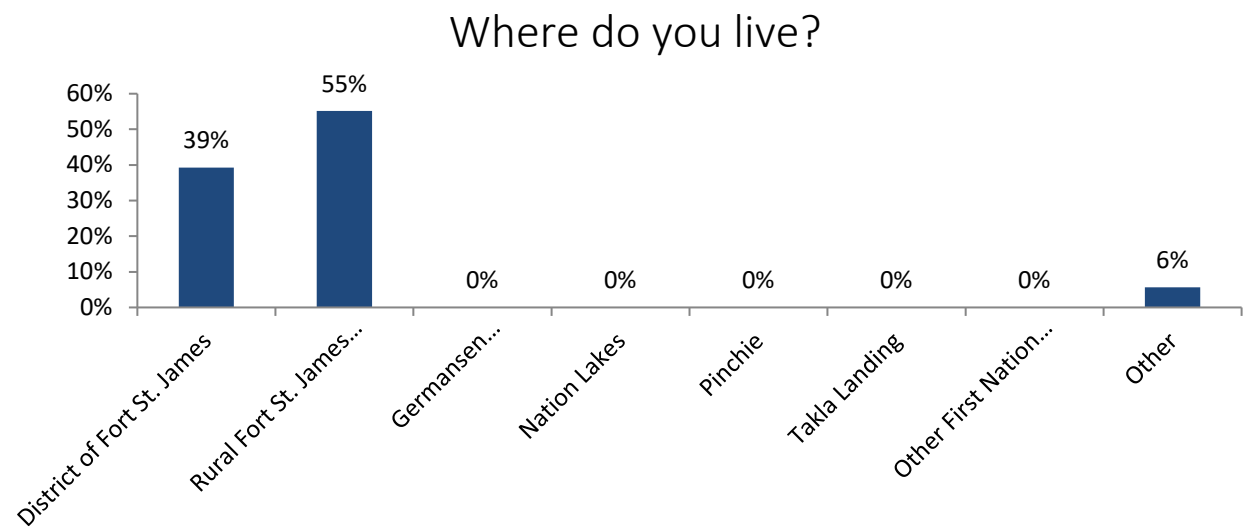
Community priorities place emphasis on trail connectivity, increasing access, and improving stewardship. Key priorities include:

- **Trail improvement** - Creating and managing new trails, including mountain biking trails, alongside upgrading existing routes. This includes joining McLeod Lake and Nak'adzli to improve the Grease Trail.
- **Local First Nations** - Acknowledging and prioritizing local First Nations in the overall vision of the Parks and Trails Master Plan and ensuring their meaningful involvement in the establishment of a Parks and Trails working group.
- **Safe connections** - Developing safer connections between communities and key destinations, specifically Sowchea Road linking to Fort St. James.
- **Additional land** - Acquiring new land for regional parks to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Recreation opportunities** - Expanding opportunities for year round recreation and nature opportunities.
- **Recreation access** - Improving access to beaches, the Mount Pope trails, the T-caves climbing area, and year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road.
- **New amenities** - Adding supporting amenities including pit toilets, improved signage, and accessible trail upgrades, to support tourism opportunities.

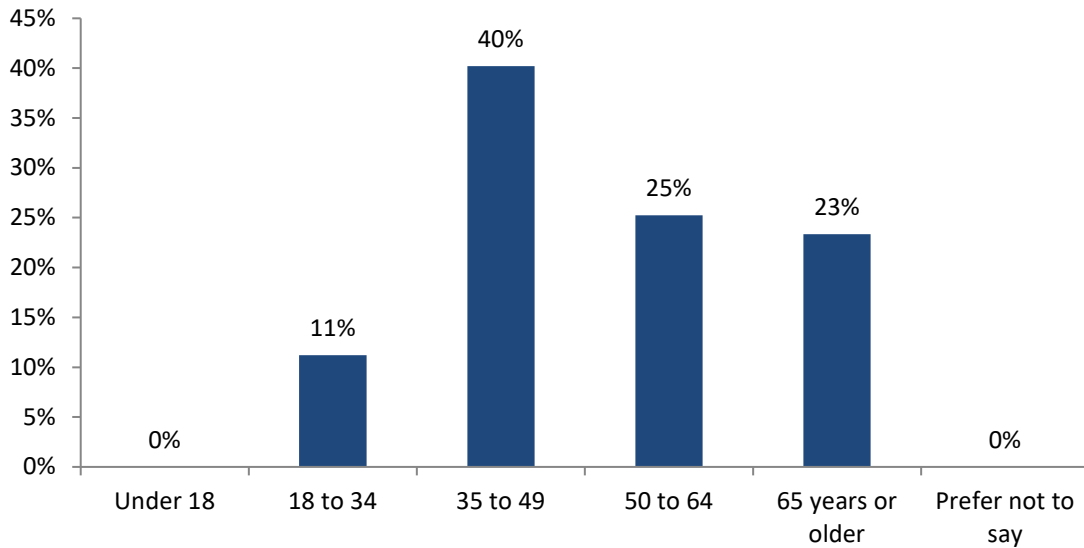
APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY 1 SUMMARY

Who Responded

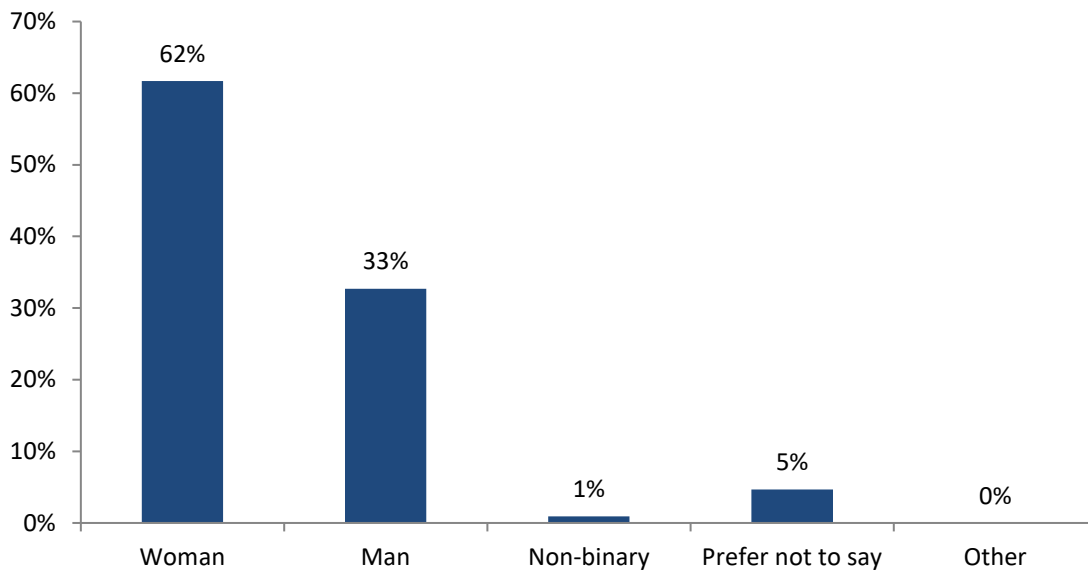
- The survey was completed by a total of 107 respondents.
- The majority of respondents identified as women (62%).
- The largest age group of respondents were between 35 and 49 years of age (40%).
- Less than half of respondents noted having children under the age of 18 living at home (37%).
- The majority of respondents were from Rural Fort St James, up to 20km from municipal limits (55%).



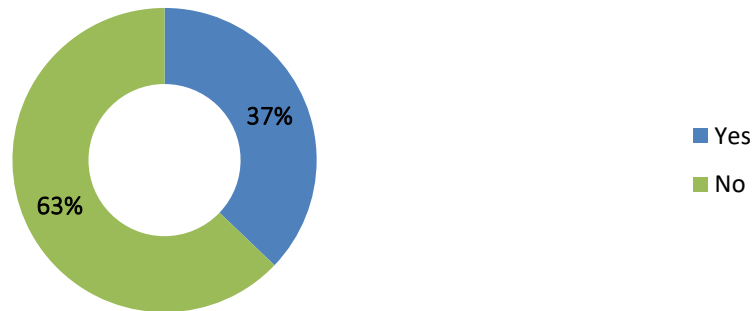
What age category are you?



What gender do you identify with?



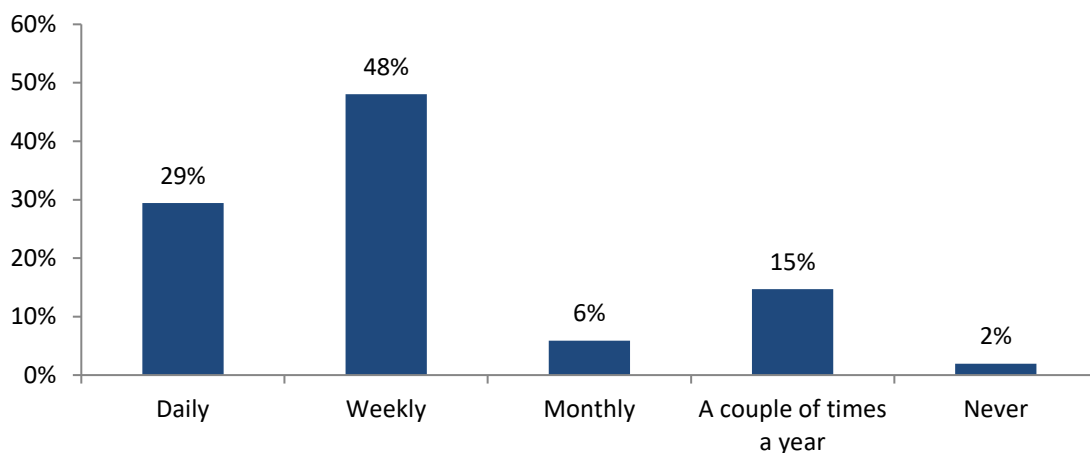
Do you have children under the age of 18 living at home?



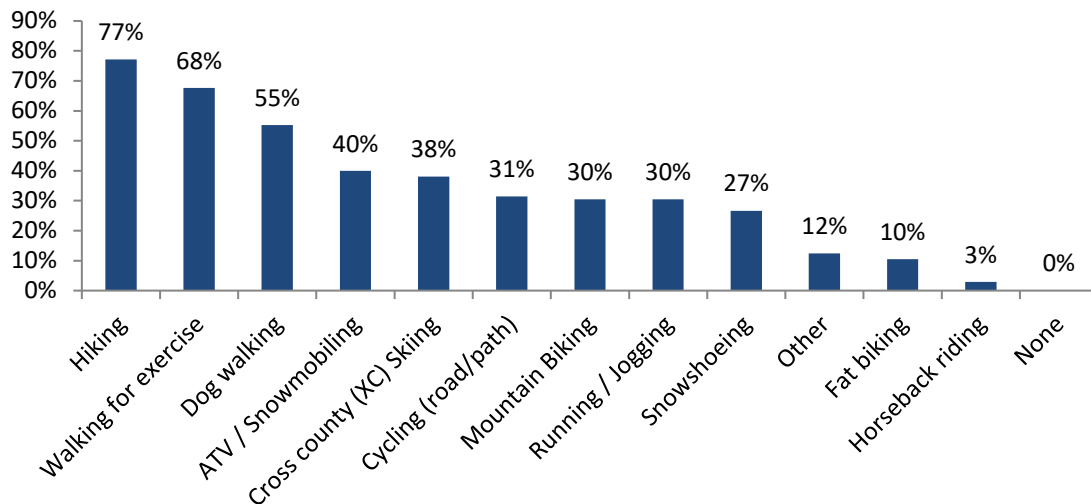
Trail Use Habits

- Roughly three-quarters of respondents noted using trails at least on a weekly basis (77%).
- The most popular trail activities among respondents were hiking (77%), walking for exercise (68%), and dog walking (55%).
- Though not as popular as summer activities, a significant portion of respondents reported participating in winter trail activities.
- The most popular trail activity among the children of respondents was hiking (69%), though ATV/snowmobiling (49%), cycling (49%), dog walking (44%), and mountain biking (44%) were also common responses.

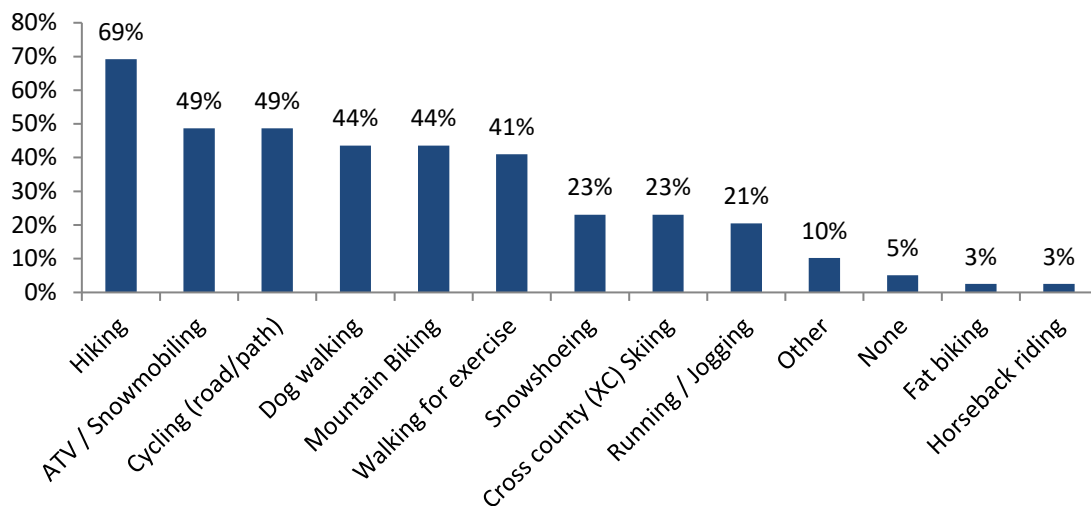
How often do you use trails?



What types of trail activities do you do most often? (Select all that apply)



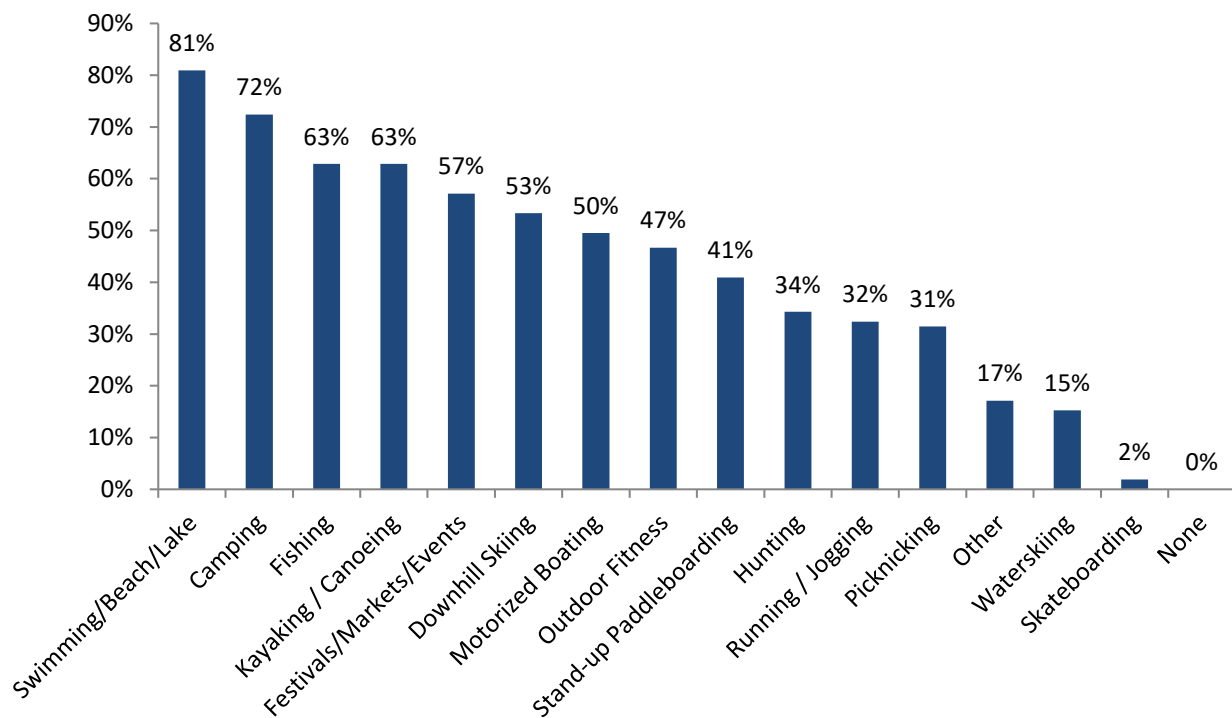
What types of trail activities do your children do most often? (Select all that apply).



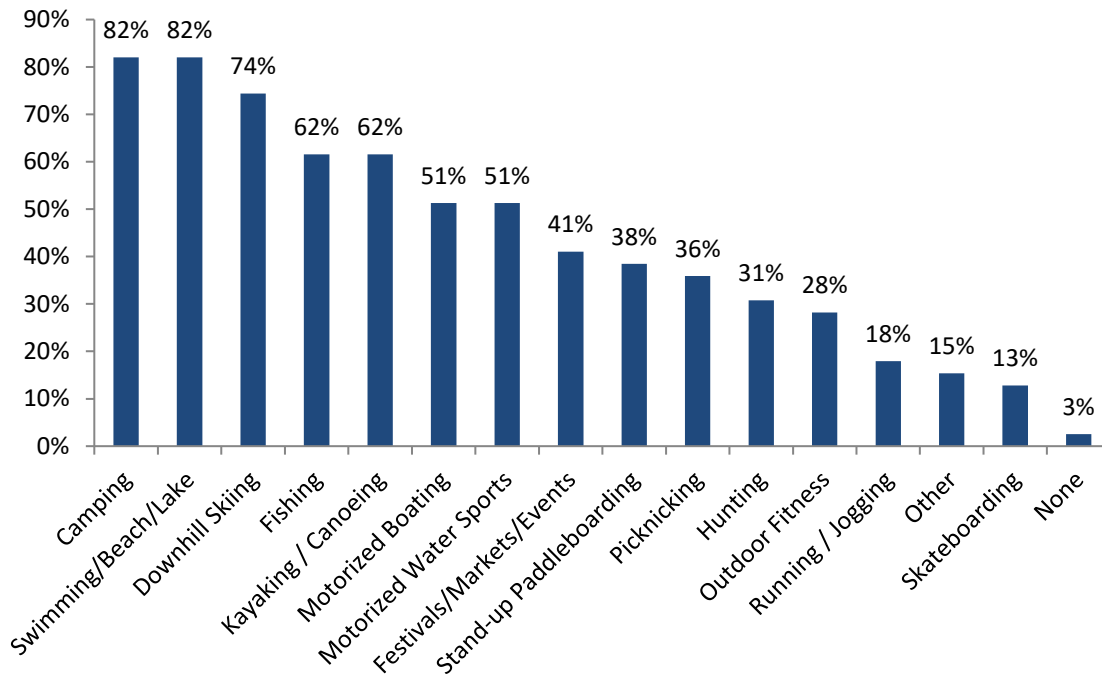
Outdoor Recreation Habits

- Water-based activities such as swimming and visitation of lakes and beaches were the most popular outdoor recreation activities among respondents (81%).
- Many respondents participated in camping (72%), fishing (63%), kayaking and canoeing (63%), festivals, markets, or other events (57%), and downhill skiing (53%).
- The most popular outdoor recreation activities among the children of respondents were camping (82%), swimming/going to the lake (82%), and downhill skiing (74%).

What types outdoor activities do you enjoy? Think of all times of the year. (Select all that apply).



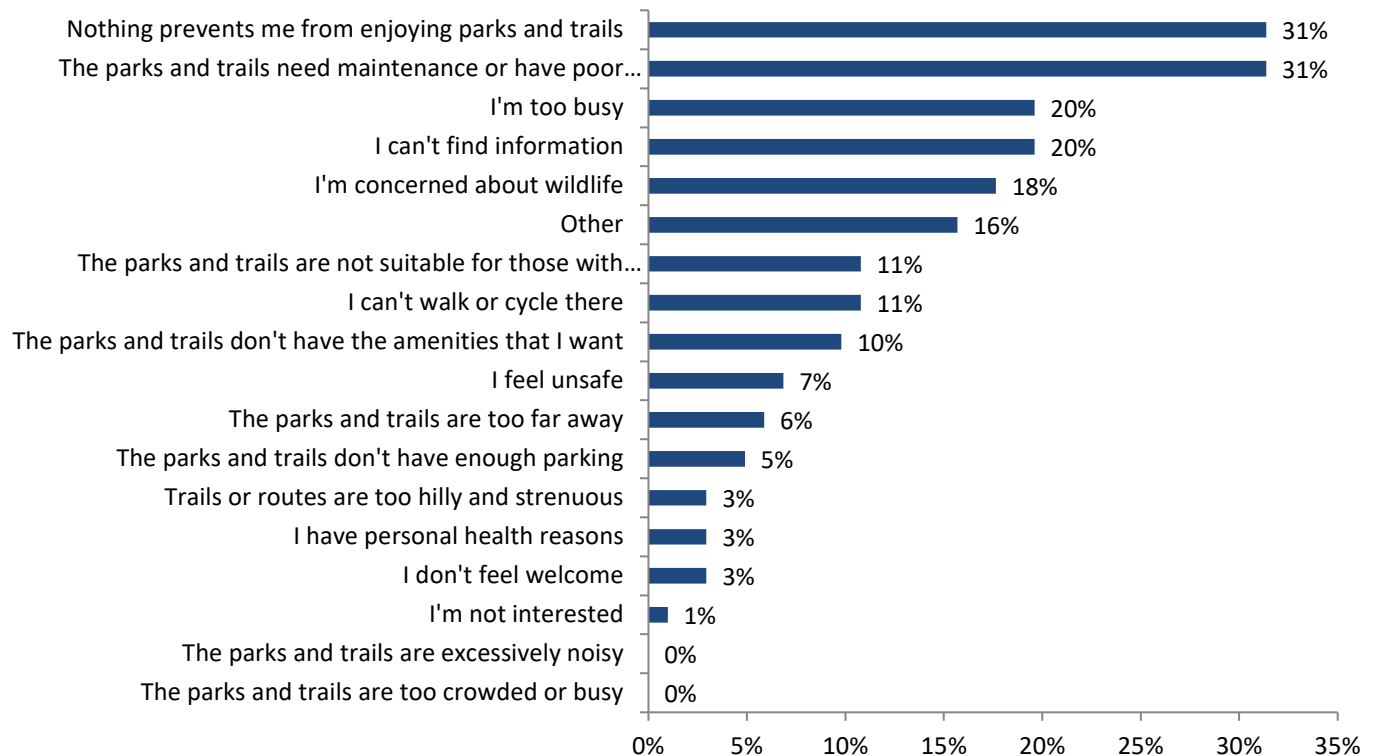
What types outdoor activities do your children enjoy? Think of all seasons and times of the year. (Select all that apply).



Barriers to Accessing Outdoor Recreation

- The primary barriers to using parks and trails more often were poor park and trail maintenance (31%), being too busy (20%), and lack of information (20%).
- Roughly one-third of respondents said they don't face any barriers in accessing parks and trails (31%).

What, if anything, keeps you from visiting parks or getting out on trails more often? (Select your top 3 reasons).



Key Destinations

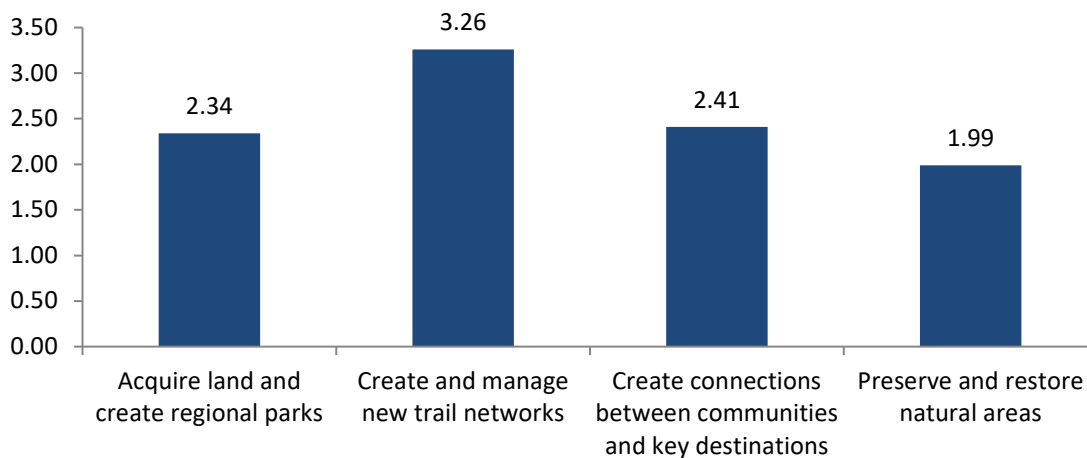
Destinations raised by engagement participants included:

- Mt. Pope trails (n=60)
- Stuart River (n=26)
- Murray Ridge trails (n=25)
- Sowchea Bay (n=14)
- Paarens Beach Provincial Park trails (n=11)
- Graveyard trails (n=9)
- Mt. Dickinson trails (n=7)
- Cottonwood Park (n=6)
- T-Caves (n=6)
- Nyan Wheti (n=3)
- Jim Henry Trail (n=2)
- Whitefish Bay (n=2)
- Russ Baker Memorial (n=1)
- Pinchi Mountain (n=1)

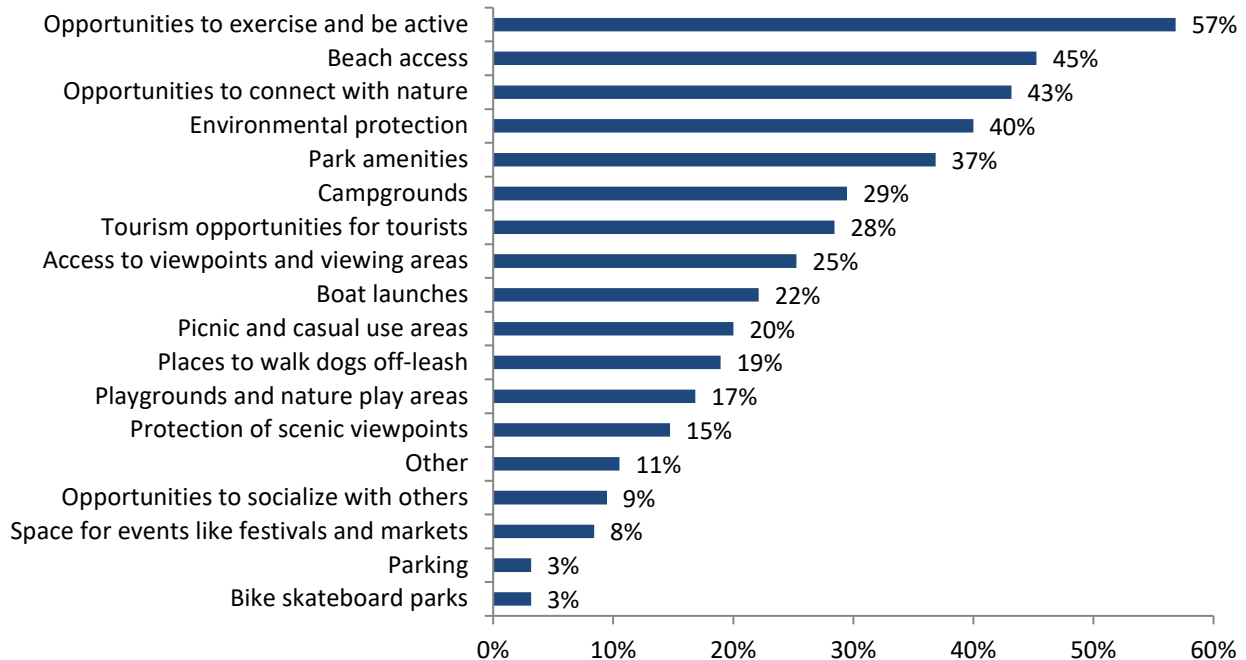
Park and Trails Priorities

- Respondents indicated that the **creation and management of new trails networks** should be prioritized over the next 10 years (Score of 3.26/4). 56% of respondents selected this as their top priority.
- The **creation of connections between communities and key destinations** was of importance to respondents (Score of 2.41/4).
- Respondents indicated that opportunities to be **active** (57%), **beach access** (45%), opportunities to **connect with nature** (43%), and **environmental protection** (40%) are their main priorities for parks in Electoral Area C.
- Respondents indicated that **hiking and walking** (80%), trail **signage** (55%), **improved trail connections to other parks and trails** (37%), **mountain bike trails** (36%), and **tourism opportunities for visitors** (33%) are their main priorities for trails and active transportation in Electoral Area C.
- More respondents were supportive of tax increases to fund parks and trails improvements than those opposed (59% supportive compared to 21% opposed). A fifth of respondents (20%) were neutral regarding increased taxation.
- When asked what else we need to know, many respondents commented on the need for improved signage, wayfinding, and information (n=10). Improved maintenance (n=9) and the importance of parks and trails to local tourism (n=9) were also commonly mentioned.

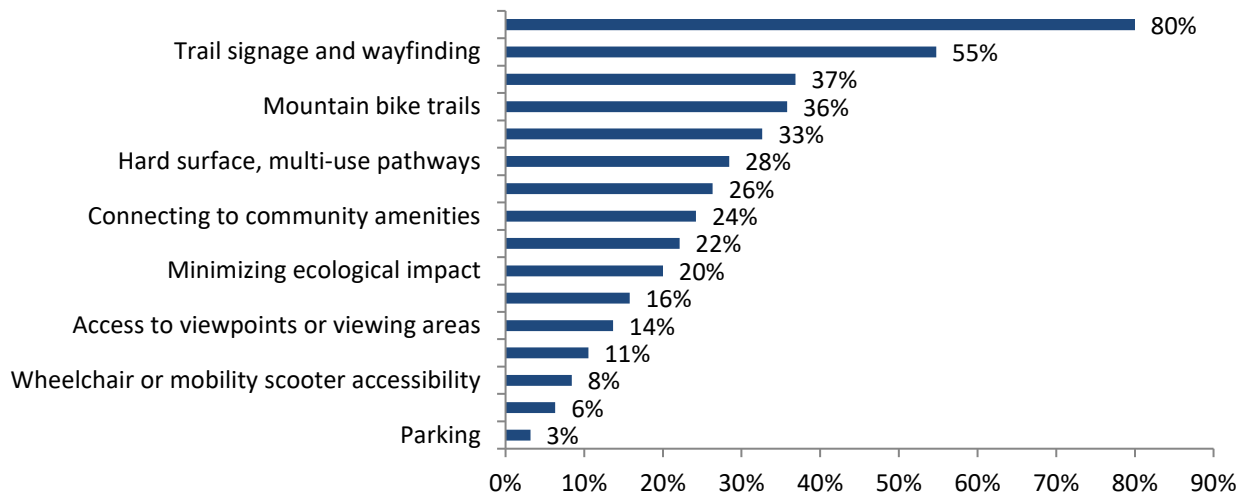
What should the RDBN prioritize in parks and trails over the next 10 years? (Rank options in order of priority).



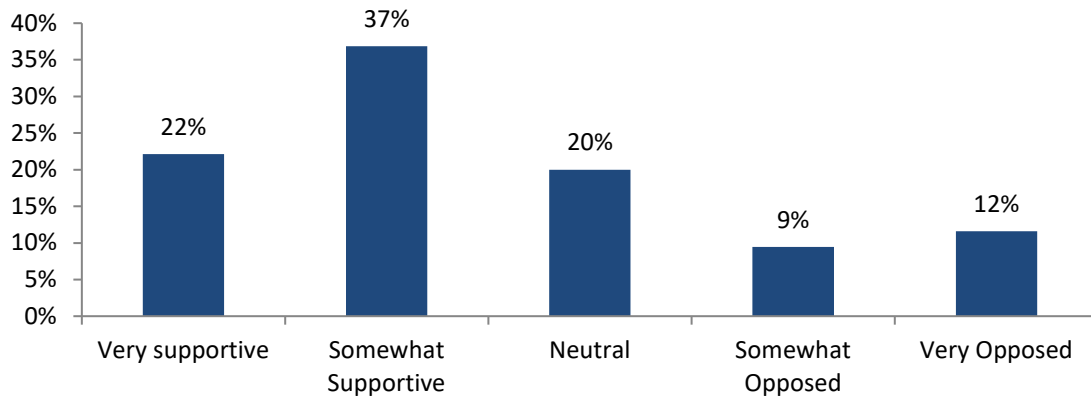
What are your main priorities for parks in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)? (Select your top 5)



What are your main priorities for trails and active transportation in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)? (Select your top 5).



How supportive are you of a tax increase to fund the acquisition of new parks and trails, or the development of new infrastructure in parks and trails?

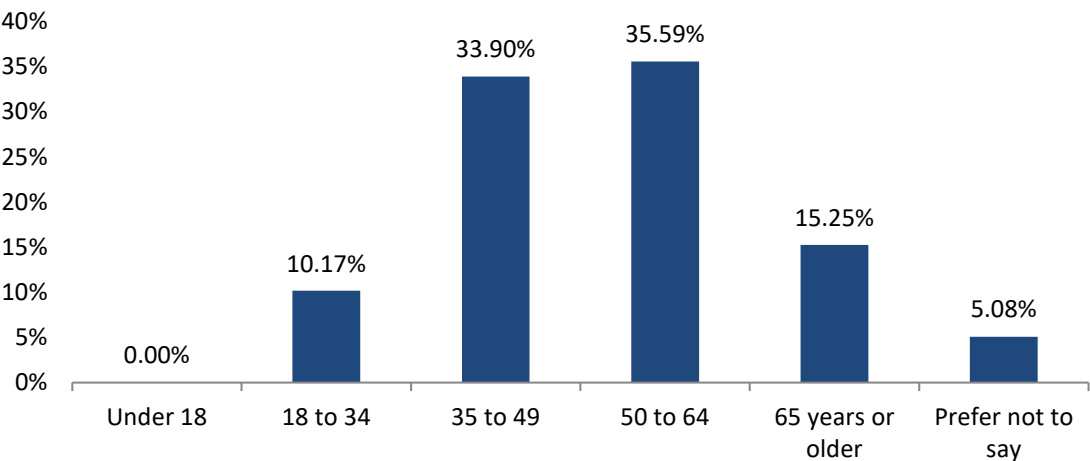


APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY 2 SUMMARY

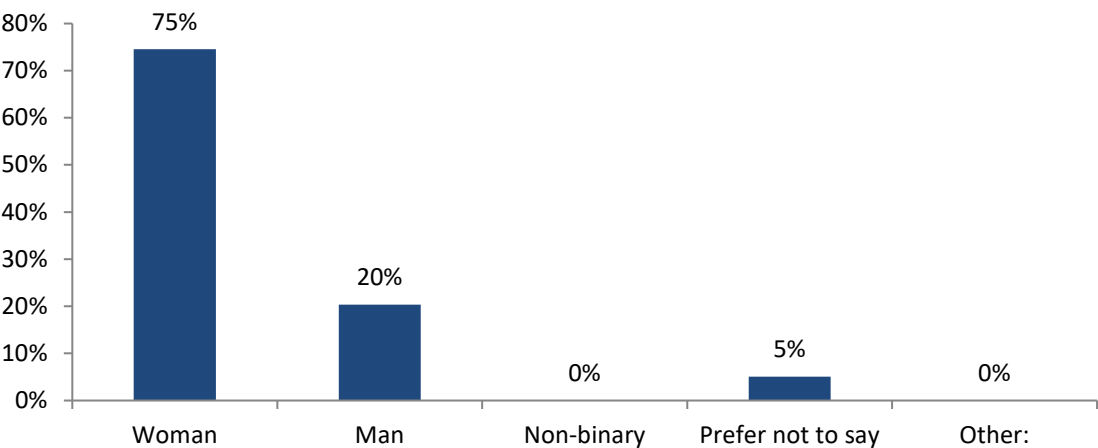
Who Responded

- The survey was completed by a total of 76 respondents.
- Most respondents were between the ages of 35 to 64 (69%).
- Most respondents identify as women (75%).
- Most respondents live in Rural Fort St James (up to 20 kilometers from municipal limits) (59%). The remaining live in the District of Fort St. James (29%) or in other locations, such as Vanderhoof (12%).

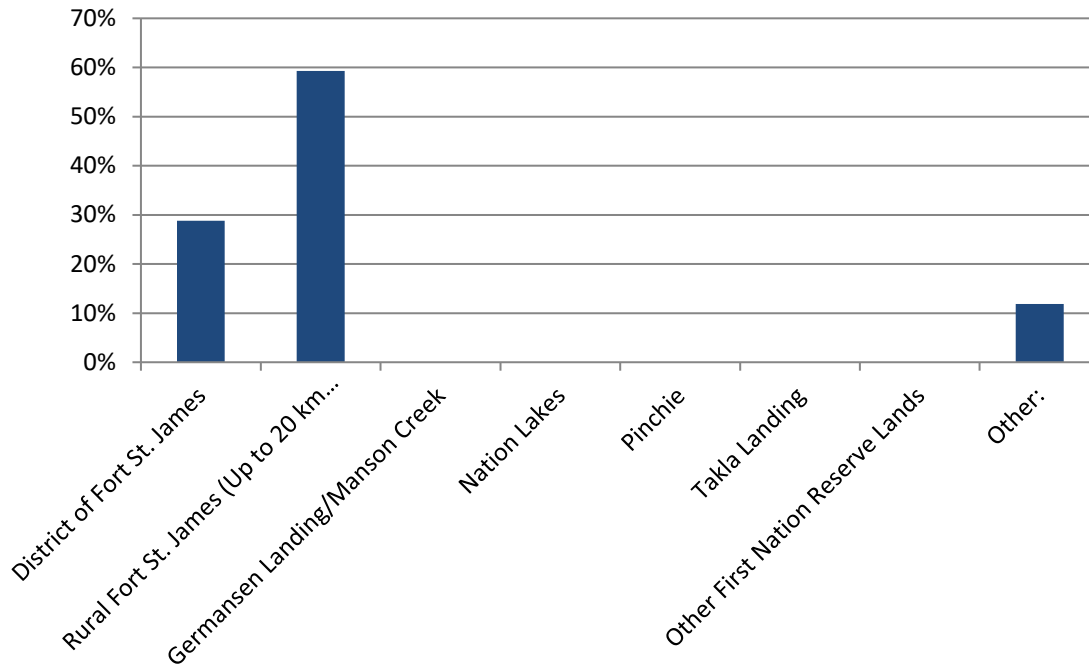
What age category are you?



What gender do you identify with?



Where do you live?

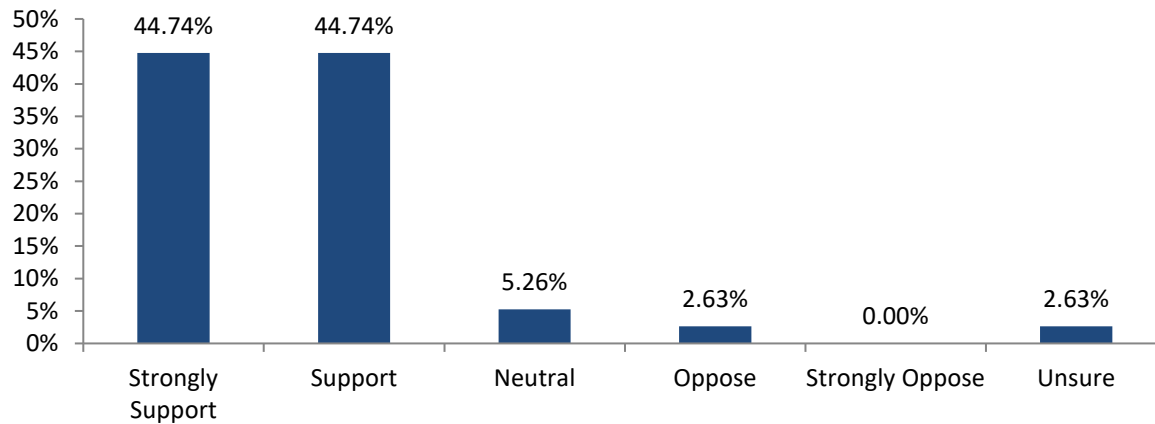


Vision statement

The majority (89%) of respondents support the draft vision statement. 19 community members provided suggestions on improvements to the vision statement including:

- Multiple concerns over vague language and a need for concrete objectives;
- Multiple mentions to recognize Indigenous peoples rights and title;
- Specific additions or upgrades to trails;
- Regional districts acting as a liaison between authorities;
- Emphasizing sustainability;
- Acknowledging safety and accessibility;
- Specific addition and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g. outhouses and signage); and
- Highlighting funding, regional collaboration and tourism, and detailed action plans.

To what extent do you support the Vision Statement?

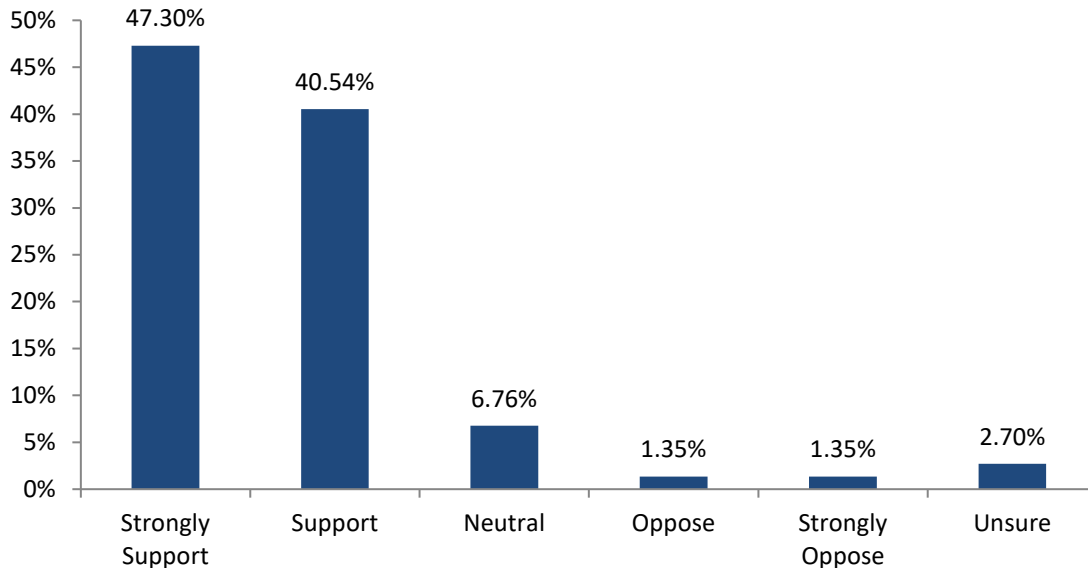


Five goals

The majority of respondents support the five goals (88%), and 19 community members provided further information on which goals were missed for parks and trails. Responses included:

- Multiple mentions noting the importance of goal 5 and moving to goal 1;
- Concern over the vague descriptions;
- Desire for goals mentioning maintenance cost, funding, tourism, and leadership responsibility;
- Adding language on accessibility, trail development, and land purchase funding as goals;
- Emphasizing safety, maintenance, recognition and consent from Indigenous consultation, ecosystem conservation, and expanding trail networks;
- Specific concerns about Sowchea Road safety; and
- Advocating for supporting and upkeeping existing recreation assets.

To what extent do you support the five goals?



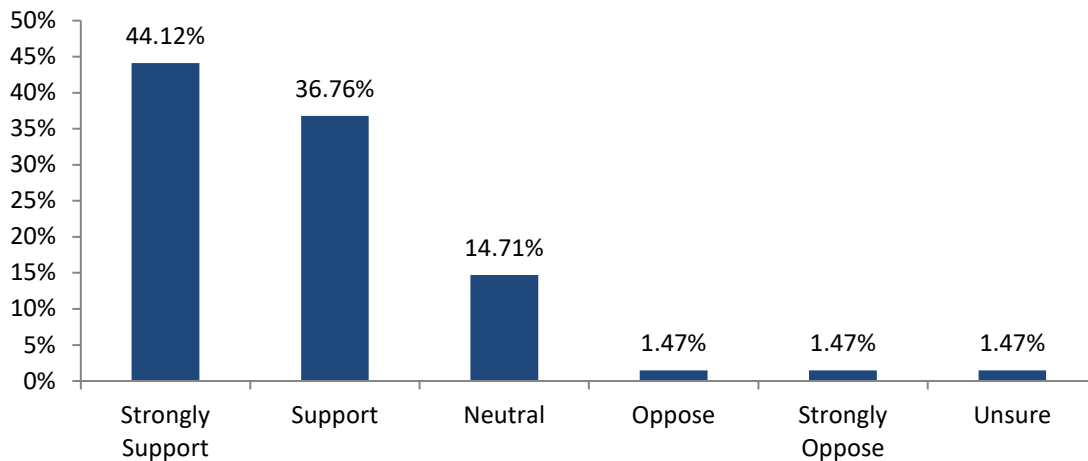
Support for a Trails Working Group

The majority (81%) of respondents are supportive of a parks and trails working group. 24 survey respondents elaborated on their responses, including:

- A need to acknowledge collaboration can also slow down the process with mention of clear leadership and concrete outcomes as important to its success.
- Mention of the benefits of working groups to drive maintenance and growth through permanent action but consideration is needed for long-term support.
- Desire for clarity on who will be in the group and desire for equal representation across organizations in the working group. Missing information on how this will be done and what is affected.
- Capacity for involvement: Current volunteers are mainly seniors and overworked; Region struggles with lack of volunteers, and the group could face difficulties with different schedules. Mention group members could get paid. Partnerships have the potential to ease burden on volunteers and create employment for local FN people
- First Nations: Would like to see 50 percent First Nation representation; require First Nations support, Indigenous involvement throughout the process
- Working group desires: Mention of priority to focus on improving accessibility and an overall desire for more funding.

- Concerns and limitations: Fear over the decline of local recreation opportunities with a desire for much more. Concern over town turning into park. Acknowledgement of both proactiveness and reactivity to the areas needs

How supportive are you of the RDBN helping to form a parks and trails working group?



Forming a hiking or mountain biking organization

Respondents were asked if they were interested in creating a hiking or mountain biking group, with access to funds provided through a Recreation Contribution Program. 35 respondents answered, eight of which noted they were not interested. Those interested or with further comments provided more details summarized below.

- A few respondents noted there are many active bikers and hikers in the community who would be interested, however limitations in distance, ongoing commitments, and time were identified as barriers to participation. One mention preferred a group supporting a wide range of recreation options, beyond biking or hiking.
- Some respondents mentioned they may already have a group, mentioning Stuart Lake Outdoor Group, or they are surprised there isn't currently a group, with mention of a desire to partner with Murray Ridge.
- A few respondents noted there is concern the volunteers are getting older and current volunteers don't want a dedicated organizational group.
- There were a few respondents who were interested in becoming leaders with a few contacts provided.
- There was mention that Murray Ridge Ski Hill and the fire department should be included and desire for an acknowledgement of the previous mountain biking groups dedication to creating existing recreational assets.

- An additional comment was presented that the Fort St. James Sled Dog Association was not mentioned in the report. They partner with the Fort St. James Snowmobile Club to maintain and enhance access, particularly on Stuart Lake. Respondent would like to see them given the opportunity for more input.

Prioritizing access to outdoor recreation

Respondents were asked to rank a series of priorities regarding priorities to increase access to outdoor recreation. The highest ranked priorities were to:

- Seek opportunities to support access to Mount Pope trails, T-caves climbing area, and improving amenities such as parking and washroom facilities (3.72/4).
- Explore opportunities to improve year-round access to Stuart Lake along Stones Bay Road in support of a non-motorized boating and cross-country ski trails on the lake (3.34/4).

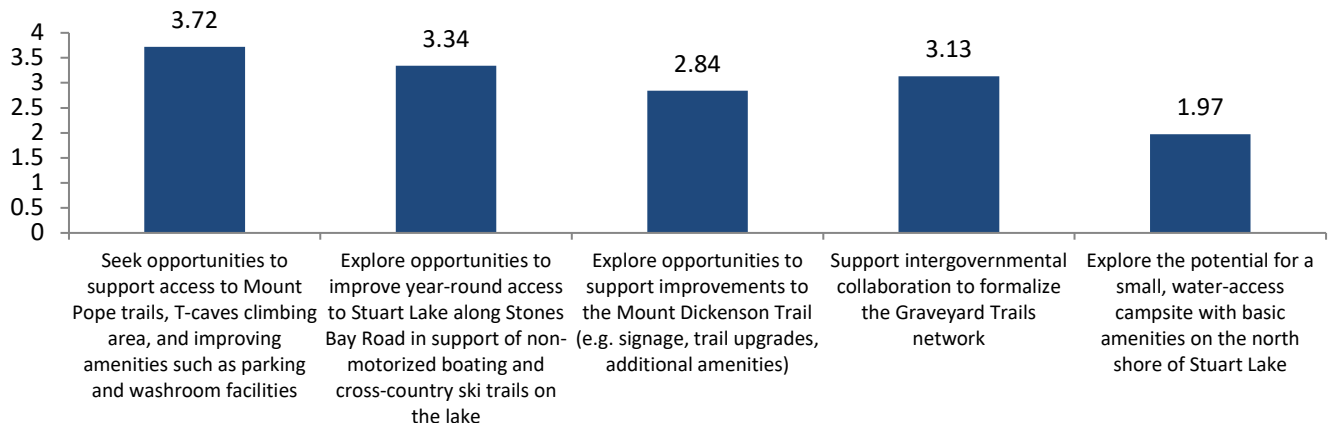
The lower ranked priorities were:

- Explore opportunities to support improvements to the Mount Dickenson Trail (e.g. signage, trail upgrades, additional amenities) (2.84/4).
- Support intergovernmental collaboration to formalize the Graveyard Trails network (3.13/4).

The lowest ranked:

- Explore the potential for a small, water-access campsite with basic amenities on the north shore of Stuart Lake (1.97/4).

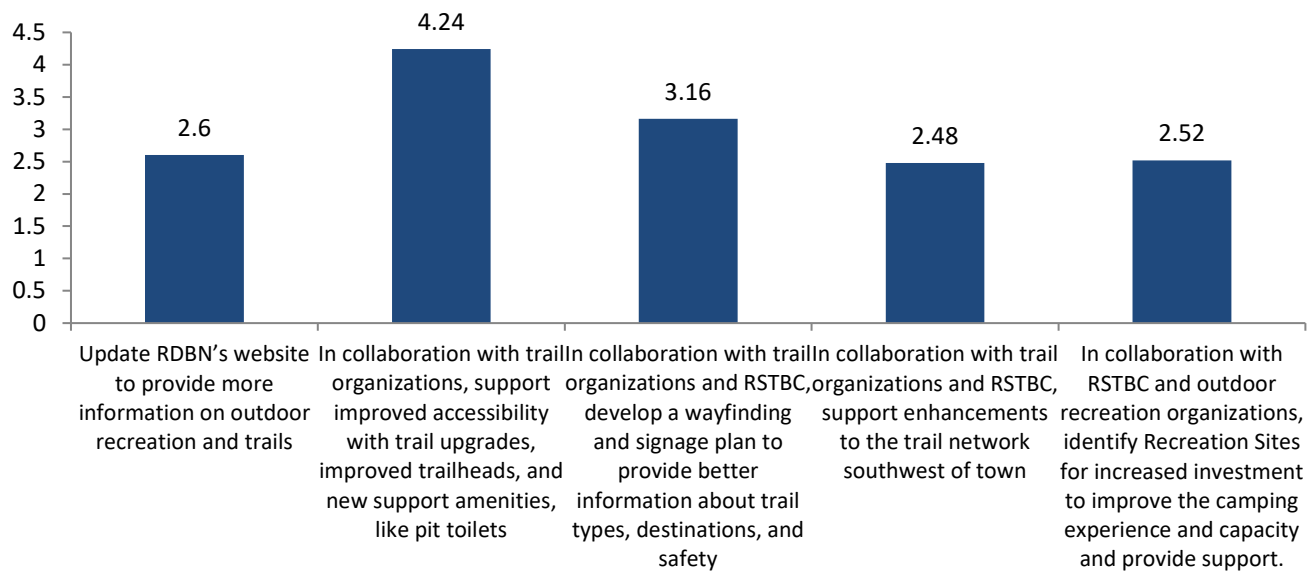
The RDBN's role in increasing access to outdoor recreation in Electoral Area C will primarily be through collaboration with other levels of government, land managers, and community organizations. With this in mind, which actions should the RDBN prioritize



Prioritizing the user experience of parks and trails

Respondents were asked to prioritize actions presented for Goal 4. Participants would like to prioritize improving accessibility in collaboration with trail organizations, including trail upgrades, improved trailheads, and new support amenities (4.24/5). They also prioritized developing a wayfinding and signage plan to provide better information about trail types, destinations, and safety (3.16/4.5).

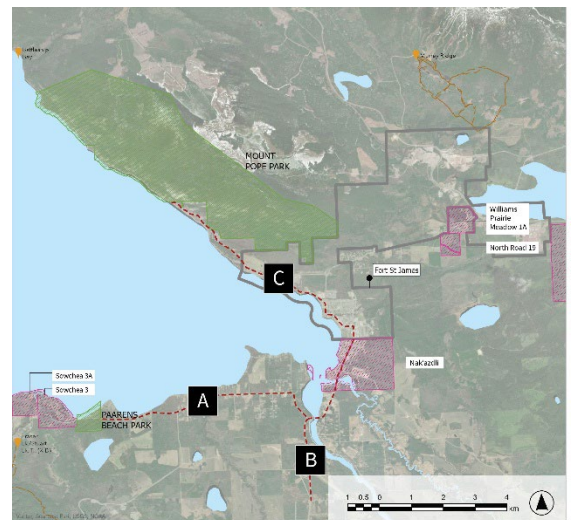
Which actions should the RDBN prioritize for Goal 4? Rank from highest priority to lowest priority by dragging the text boxes or by using the arrows on the right.



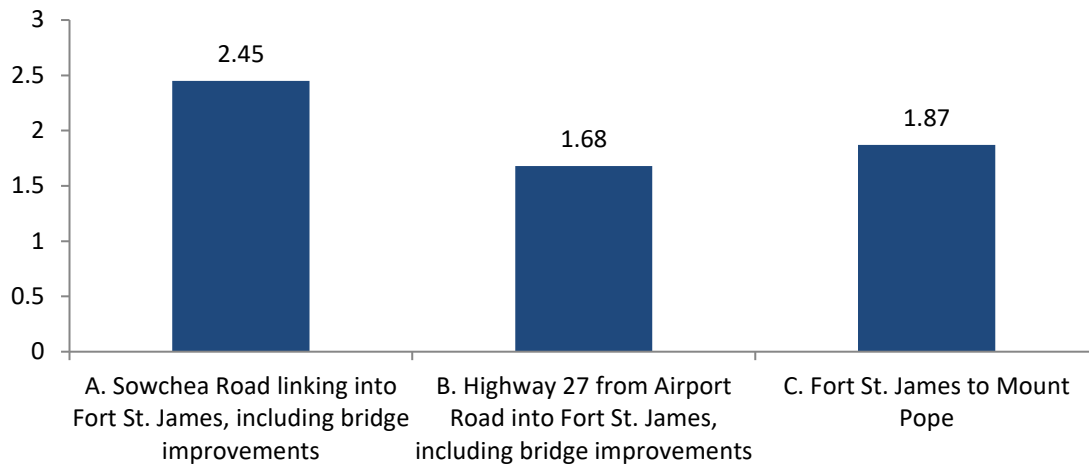
Prioritizing roadside trail connections

Respondents were asked to rank the trail segments from the highest to lowest priority to plan and fund connections with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit. Responses would like to prioritize Sowchea Road linking to Fort St. James, including Bridge improvements (2.45/3), as shown in the map to the left.

- A: Sowchea Road linking into Fort St. James
- B: Highway 27 from Airport Road into Fort St. James, including bridge improvements
- C: Fort St. James to Mount Pope



Three segments of roadside trail connections have been identified for Electoral Area C, as shown in Figure 1 below. The RDBN can support the planning and funding of these connections, including coordination with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit.



Additional comments

32 respondents shared further comments on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan. Common themes included:

- Multiple comments stressing the importance of meaningful collaboration with Nak'zadli and Dakelh peoples and concern over the lack of involvement in developing the Plan.
- Emphasis on accessibility and inclusion as a priority, including considering marginalized communities in the plan.
- Desire for support to existing organizations and acknowledgement of the work that unofficial groups have done on the trails. Lots of community desire to help.
- Widespread support for safer trail connections and linked trail systems.
- Desire to reuse and revitalize poorly maintained spaces (e.g. former forestry campsites, culturally, and historically significant locations).