



PAVED TRAIL CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATING PLAN

Revision 1 – May 6, 2024

PREFACE

This plan is intended to be a basis for discussion of the paved trail project with BC Parks. As a working document, it will be updated in tandem with the development of collaborative arrangements between SLNC and BC Parks.

1. Executive Summary

SLNC proposes installing a paved multi-use trail system and other amenities providing unique alpine forest access for community use. It is expected that the facility can be used by the community for cycling, wheelchair access, roller skiing, scooters, running, and picnics. This document describes initial route considerations and general community amenities, and provides an initial description of how the project would be developed, funded, and installed. An overview of the operating model, budgetary considerations, risks and liabilities is also presented. The intent of the document is to present a single working reference that collects the details of all topics relevant to the new facility so that they can be developed and agreed upon between the working team, SLNC board of directors, and BC Parks.

2. Introduction

In cooperation with BC Parks, Sovereign Lake Nordic Club ("SLNC") proposes installing a paved multi-use trail system and amenities ("Trail") extending up to about four kilometres amongst the existing trail system in Silver Star Provincial Park ("SSPP"). The Trail is intended to serve the needs of club members, the community at large, and visitors. The Trail offers a unique BC Parks facility suitable for use by athletes, children on scooters and bicycles, citizens in wheelchairs, and others in a high alpine forest, at an altitude that escapes the summer heat in the valley, and safe from threats from vehicular traffic. This document outlines the overall plan for Trail construction and operation.

3. Proposal and Value Proposition

SLNC, with its facilities within SSPP, provides well-known opportunities for winter recreation that are enjoyed by approximately 50,000 visitors per season. While paved bicycle paths besides roads are increasingly prevalent in the Okanagan, separated paved trails are less common, and paved and looping trails within forests are rare. By virtue of the wide trails and other facilities already installed at SSPP, new and unique recreational opportunities can be created for the summer.

SLNC proposes installing a network of paved, looping trails extending a total of up to about four kilometres in length. A conceptual layout of these amenities is described in Figures 1 to 3. The final design of the Trail will balance the multiple needs of a variety of community users, access to alpine forest ambiance, viewpoints, design considerations from BC Parks, and overall costs. A Trail system where community members can regularly enjoy a high alpine forested environment and, by virtue of its high altitude, a cool getaway from the Okanagan valley heat is envisaged.

The attributes of summer recreation are, of course, already available to park visitors. Installing the Trail extends the following benefits:

1. From the SLNC perspective, the Trail can extend its training capacity for local athletes, draw new athletes to SLNC, and increase the chances of athletes to qualify for provincial and national teams that participate in prestigious national and international events. It is expected that the Trail would also provide a smooth base for early season ski operations, thereby extending the season.
2. From the community perspective, the Trail offers a safe place for young children to ride bicycles and scooters, for families to enjoy time together in a new environment, and provides wheelchair and walker access to the high alpine forest. SLNC is presently gathering input and advice from knowledgeable accessibility advocates at CRIS Adaptive Adventures, Destination Silver Star, and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, as well as input from members of the public, City of Vernon and RDNO Parks and Recreation departments, Ribbons of Green Society, and Spirit North.
3. From a regional perspective, the Trail is expected to become a unique extension to BC Park's portfolio, by offering the only such paved trail system in the Okanagan. The Trail is expected to become a local economic benefit through attracting athletes to visit the site (and potentially reside in the Okanagan), and, as it is expected to permit a pre-opening ski trail, draw skiers to the region for some of the earliest skiing in North America. By extension, additional equipment needs and an extended season present benefits to related retailers and accommodation services. The facility will also enhance community safety, as athletes will be able to avoid training on roads alongside motorized vehicles.

4. Construction Development Plan

The development of the Trail will be undertaken in several phases, as described below. Collaboration with, and approval by, BC Parks is an obvious underlying requirement. It is expected that SLNC will work closely with BC Parks, and that approval milestones will be added to the plan as they are provided by BC Parks. In addition, SLNC will rely on BC Parks to complete all First Nations consultation and to obtain the advice of the local First Nations on the design and construction processes.

SLNC understands that BC Parks may be obliged to be responsible for final design, tendering, and construction supervision, consistent with many other capital projects in provincial parks. However, given the project's limited scope, SLNC may be authorized to assume these roles. The path forward in this regard will be agreed through discussion between SLNC and BC Parks.

4.1 Preliminary Design

A conceptual route has been developed following preliminary discussion with BC Parks (see Figure 1). Upon closer inspection, this proposed route travels over the existing septic bed (highlighted as 1A in

Figure 1) and also includes a trail with ~30% grade which is viewed as too dangerous for inclusion (highlighted as 1B in Figure 1).

SLNC has reviewed the proposed design and reflected some suggested updates that factor in general park access and also include amenities for broader park use by the community. This overview is shown in Figure 2. The route replaces the loop suggested as 1A with an out and back route that ends at the current scenic overlook. In addition, 1B is replaced with routes that are less steep but also provide interesting terrain. To broaden the appeal of the park area to as many users as possible, features are suggested as noted by 2B on Figure 2; adding a paved square and access trail for seasonal installation of basketball net and picnic area, installation of an oval to represent a 400m track for area athletes looking to train away from summer heat and as a central hub where kids can be overseen by parents. The area inside the oval is a relatively flat natural field; natural grasses could be hand trimmed to allow for frisbee and soccer. Area 2C in Figure 2 could be modified to add an unpaved pump track (these terrain profiles can also be use as kid's fun ski area in winter).

The following steps are required to advance the design to the point where fundraising can be initiated:

- Consult with BC Parks on the entirety of this document, and related Park Use Permit requirements.
- Consult with other clubs (e.g., Canmore Whistler Olympic Park, and Caledonia Nordic Ski Club in Prince George) and review Federation International Ski to ascertain Trail design and operational best practices (including configuration, amenities, summer operations and maintenance, biathlon range access and controls, insurance and permitting, and early season snow grooming).
- Review BC Parks trails standards.
- Agree with BC Parks on required community members and stakeholder consultation to ascertain preferred Trail design attributes.
- Complete preliminary Trail design (including Trail widths (which are nominally expected to match the seven metres width of the snow groomer to limit potential for damage), turns, routes, and connections). As a first step, it is recommended that the design team walk the proposed route accompanied by BC Parks, SLNC, and relevant community stakeholders (including likely users and knowledgeable trail advocates) as their input will help inform the design.
- Based on the preliminary design, complete environmental and archaeological assessments, following BC Parks guidelines, to determine the potential for adverse effects and to identify options to avoid, mitigate, or offset any identified effects. Depending on the findings, the “footprint” of the Trail and/or the construction and operational procedures may be revised.
- Making use of the revised preliminary design, develop the construction plan (including surveying, ground works, materials, transportation, site management, permits, labour).
- Establish budgetary construction estimates.
- While SLNC season pass holders have certain year-round coverages through Nordiq Canada and Biathlon BC (and Biathlon Canada), further legal advice will be sought with respect to recommended required agreements, operating permits, memoranda of understanding, indemnities, waivers, and insurance needs.
- Finalize operating model, including potential revenues and costs.
- Obtain SLNC Board of Directors approval to proceed to detailed design phase.

4.2 Fundraising for Design-Related Field Work

Certain tasks are required as precursors to finalizing the Trail design. For example, environmental and archaeological assessments of the project are required, as noted above. Other investigations (e.g. soils and drainage) may also be required as the preliminary design is developed. Further, it may be necessary to have detailed design drawings prepared by a professional firm. Lastly, legal advice will be obtained to ensure that the requisite permits, insurance, and indemnifications can be obtained to protect SLNC from reasonable risks associated with this new off-season facility. After the scope of this work is determined, estimates for third-party work will be obtained, and fundraising activities initiated to complete this design-related work. All fundraising for the project will be coordinated through the SLNC fundraising committee and will be mindful of other fundraising activities (e.g., SLNC lodge renewal).

4.3 Final Detailed Design

Following the development of the detailed final design, the next steps will be:

- Consult with other clubs with Trails (e.g., Canmore, etc.) and construction companies to determine estimated costs for small and large maintenance/repairs and equate these to a fund level to be held in trust (so Trail can be maintained in good condition in perpetuity).
- Determine list of (temporary removable) signs required to ensure safe use (safety, direction of traffic, BC Parks standard signage for use and emergencies, etc.)
- Determine required tools to clean debris from Trails, and related costs.
- Complete detailed construction plans and obtain Level 5 project cost quotations.
- Obtain quotes for insurance and operational factors.
- Obtain SLNC Board of Directors approval to proceed to full project fundraising phase.

4.4 Full Project Fundraising

Funds to complete the activities identified above will be pursued through discussions with various stakeholders, including BC Parks, RDNO, Vernon Tourism Commission, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, related companies, and through pursuit of grants, sponsors, and donations. A fundraising plan will be developed once more details on scope and cost of the project have been developed. The fundraising plan will be mindful of fundraising activities underway for the SLNC lodge renewal plan, looking for synergies. It is expected that the fundraising program will include a designated amount to be held by SLNC for future paving maintenance/repairs (with such repairs to be discussed in advance with BC Parks).

When the funding is secured, a motion will be raised to the SLNC board of directors requesting authorization to proceed to the construction phase.

4.5 Permitting and Construction

Following development of detailed construction plans and raising of funding, permitting (construction, BC Parks, etc.), and ancillary arrangements (insurance, waivers, etc.) will be completed and construction started. Best practices that are designed to (a) protect the paved trails from potential damage from winter snow grooming activities, and (b) leverage the paved trails as a route to start early skiing with minimal snow will be implemented through updates to policy, procedures, and staff training. SLNC policies and procedures will be updated to support other aspects of seasonal use of the Trail.

4.6 Optional Scope for BC Parks' Consideration

Although not required, BC Parks may wish to install various trail-side amenities, such as trail side seating, picnic tables, educational signage relating to relating to indigenous and environmental education, paved pavilions, and portable accessible toilets. The base scope for the Trail does not include these amenities.

5. Operating Model

5.1 Overview of Infrastructure and Amenities

The current yellow gate on the driveway to the SLNC parking lot will remain closed through the summer. All SLNC facilities will remain closed and no SLNC staff will be on site. Trail access will be through a paved connection near the yellow gate to the SSPP parking lot and Sovereign Lake Road (see Figure 3). Note that this parking lot and road are unpaved (i.e., gravel).

The Trail will be an as-is feature of the park, in that the SLNC buildings will remain closed except for specific special events hosted on the Trail. Elevated pit-toilets are available in the SSPP parking lot, and in the stadium area of SLNC. There will be no access to water, accessible toilets, electricity, or related infrastructure.

The yellow gate on the driveway to the SLNC parking lot will remain closed through the summer. Access to the Trail, and the entire paved trail system itself, will be uncontrolled, and not staffed, commensurate with typical BC Park trails.

5.2 Trail Condition

The trail will not be regularly maintained by SLNC, and debris (falling trees, branches, pinecones, pine needles, leaves, and other natural debris) may accumulate on the trail.

5.3 SLNC Club Use

5.3.1 SLNC Programs

SLNC will regularly use the trails to support the skills development and fitness of its members. Such use will involve individual athletes or SLNC coaches along with athletes, and include use of the biathlon range. SLNC users will periodically sweep the trail clear of debris (especially if using roller skis), and coaches, if present, can provide any first aid needs of their athletes as required. Coaches will not be obliged to provide first aid to community visitors who are not registered in a SLNC program. Sandwich boards may be placed in visible locations advising park visitors to exercise caution relating to athletes in training and that the biathlon range is in active use. While bikers and hikers successfully share trails in most BC Parks, it is noted that roller skiers do not have brakes, presenting unique safety considerations. These risks can be addressed through widening the Trail in certain locations and additional measures (e.g., signage, ropes dividing trails into two sides, etc).

5.3.2 SLNC Events

SLNC may host special training camps or offer lessons to SLNC members, program registrants, or individuals who sign up for a camp/lesson. Additionally, SLNC may host joint events where other cross-country or biathlon ski teams join SLNC in using the facility.

5.4 Public Use

SSPP is a public park, and as such, the Trail will be available for public use free of charge. Public use includes individuals who wish to roller ski (both local residents and guests from further afield) and includes Nordic ski clubs who choose to visit SSPP. The biathlon range will not be available for public use. It is expected that the public's use of the Trail will be covered by the same conditions and acceptance of risks as any BC Park. Protection of SLNC from liability from public use will need to be clearly established in conjunction with BC Parks.

5.5 Long Term Care and Maintenance and Best Practices

Through consultation with a knowledgeable construction company and operators of other similar trails, SLNC will establish best practices for summer and winter operations to (a) protect the Trail from damage (from club vehicles in summer and snow machines and groomers in winter, and (b) allow early use for skiing. Responsibility for periodic inspections of the trail surface and any culverts will be negotiated with BC Parks. Such practices will be included in operating and training manuals, and all operators will receive training prior to operating any vehicle on site.

6. Business Model

6.1 Annual Revenues

While the fees remain to be determined, SLNC expects to earn annual revenue from the Track via (a) SLNC Program registrations, SLNC Events (e.g., training camps, lessons, etc.), issuing seasonal biathlon club usage permits, issuing day-use biathlon range access permits (i.e., individuals, or visiting biathlon clubs). In addition, it is expected that grooming snow on the Trail will provide skiable terrain in advance of the regular ski season; SLNC will charge a fee for pre-season skiing.

6.2 Annual Expenses

SLNC will incur some additional effort during annual set up and tear down activities such as relocating bear-proof garbage bins, signage installation and removal, and Trail and potential culvert cleaning. It is expected that this effort can be covered by SLNC Program members, staff, and volunteers.

SLNC efforts and costs relating to periodic cleaning of garbage and washrooms will depend on the extent to which BC Parks applies its own garbage and washroom maintenance activities.

It is expected that SLNC Program members, volunteers, and staff will provide some periodic cleaning of the trail, resulting in no labour costs. Depending on advice from other operators on recommended cleaning equipment, costs may be incurred if gasoline is required to use the quad vehicle to drive the route to assist in cleaning.

Pre-season grooming is likely to use the rubber-tracked quad and existing roller available on-hand (though this is subject to best practice recommendations from other clubs with paved trails). Additional costs could be incurred related to gasoline, although it is expected that the grooming staff will already be employed full time and incur no additional labour costs for the club.

Exposures to liabilities and protections (e.g., by BC Parks, Nordiq Canada, Biathlon Canada) over the summer need to be further investigated and arrangements confirmed. Depending on these arrangements to indemnify and protect SLNC from liabilities, additional insurance policies may be required. The terms of the policies and the associated premiums are not yet known.

It is expected that any advertising by SLNC will be through the existing website social media only, and not incur any expenses.

6.3 One-Time Up-Front Expenses Related to Operations

Certain one-time expenses may be required (notwithstanding costs associated with construction). Signage and sandwich boards will be needed for directional instructions and safety, battery-powered leaf blowers and brooms will be required for periodic Trail cleaning. Although not expected to be required, a quote will be obtained to install a roller brush onto the quad (as an upper bound to summer maintenance equipment costs). Legal costs will be incurred to ensure all insurance and agreements are in place and acceptable to SLNC.

6.4 Marketing

SLNC intends to market the Trail (and pre-season ski trail access) to the Nordic ski community. At present, while SLNC would like to advertise the availability of the Trail to the community at large, it is uncertain as to whether this creates a liability. If liabilities are adequately covered, SLNC can advertise the Trail for use through its connections with the City of Vernon, Chamber of Commerce, and Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, and other partnerships.

FIGURE 1 – Conceptual Route

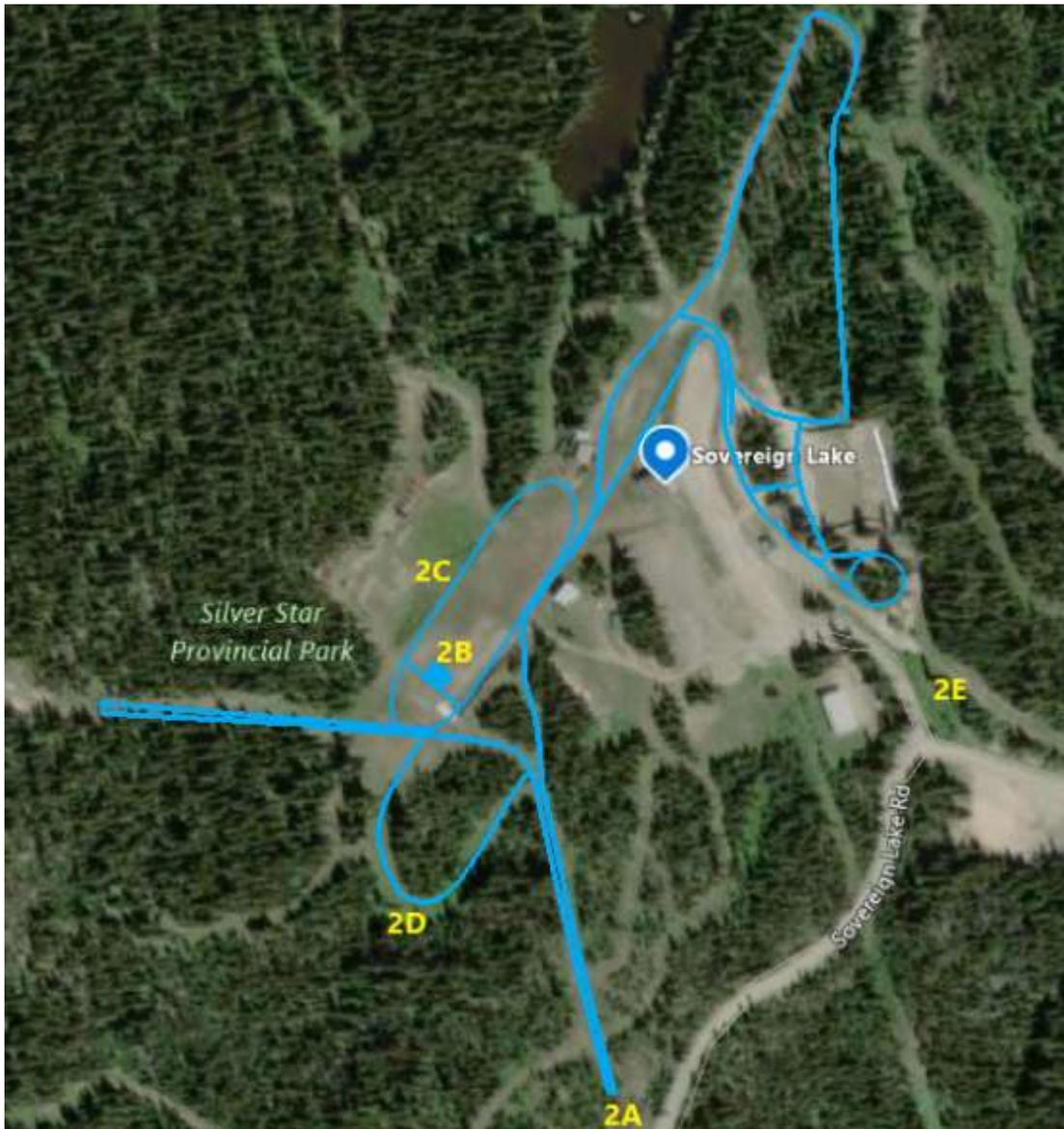


Notes:

1A – existing septic field

1B – steep grade

FIGURE 2 – Updated Conceptual Route



Notes:

- 2A – Unpaved seasonal picnic area at scenic view point
- 2B – Paved square and access trail for seasonal installation of basketball net and picnic area. Oval represents 400m track. Area inside oval is relatively flat natural field for frisbee and soccer.
- 2C - Unpaved pump track (profiles can also be use as kid's fun ski area in winter)
- 2D – Requires installing embankment as trail is presently off camber
- 2E – Summer access options (see Figure 3)

FIGURE 3 – Access Options



Notes:

3A – Existing trail (has some steep grades and crosses stream)

3B – widen road by ~2 metres and pave (eliminates harsh grades and expected to avoid need for stream crossing). Will need concrete barriers to protect from potential damage from snowplow.

3C – pave road to first aid hut. Also improves road quality for winter access by visitors and ambulances.