

**DATE:** January 19, 2024**FILE:** 8640-01**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Regional District Board**FROM:** James Warren  
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by James Warren  
Chief Administrative Officer**J. Warren****RE: Island Rail Corridor Planning Exercise Workplan****Purpose**

To propose an initial workplan for the Island Rail Corridor planning exercise.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT the workplan for the Island Rail Corridor planning exercise as outlined in the staff report dated January 19, 2023, be approved.

**Executive Summary**

- In August of 2023 the Board entered into a conditional grant agreement with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI). The agreement provided for a one-time lump sum grant of \$600,000 to enable the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) to engage in the short and long-term planning for the Island Rail Corridor (Corridor), in collaboration with First Nations and local governments impacted and/or bisected by the Corridor.
- MOTI has led the development of this process to create a shared vision for the Corridor. Upon endorsement of the grant agreement by the Board, staff were directed to bring forward a workplan for the exercise.
- Staff have been working collaboratively with representatives of MOTI, Island Corridor Foundation (ICF), K'ómoks First Nation and the other regional districts and First Nations along the Corridor. Preliminary work by the parties has been focussed on general information sharing concerning Corridor interests, confirming financial support for increased ICF capacity, reversion of those portions of the Corridor that bisect certain First Nations lands and considering approaches to detail Corridor encumbrances.
- Staff have developed a draft workplan attached as Appendix A for the Board's consideration. The workplan provides for a thorough background and technical review of the Corridor supplemented by engagement with government partners and stakeholders to help inform the creation of development options. Following consideration of these a preliminary vision and goals will be

developed to support of the subsequent creation of a long-term strategy. Inherent in this process is collaboration with the other regional working groups towards a shared vision for the whole Island Rail Corridor.

- The proposed workplan has been developed with the following key considerations:
  - The Corridor is inextricably linked to the colonial history of Vancouver Island through the original Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway land deal in which approximately two million acres of land was transferred to private interests without any consultation, compensation or other consideration with respect to First Nations. Further, the railway was instrumental in supporting the colonization of the Island that brought further economic, cultural and social harm to these communities. Given this troubling history, a partnership-driven and reconciliation-based approach with K'ómoks First Nation as well as the other regional districts and First Nations along the Corridor is proposed to ensure the outcome reflects a shared vision for the future.
  - The proposed workplan is focussed on enhancing our regional multimodal transportation network, enabling increased transportation options for people and goods through all modes and routes to help make the region more resilient, adaptable and sustainable. In this regard, the exercise detailed in the proposed workplan is proposed to be focussed on the Corridor but with consideration to the other existing parallel transportation routes.
  - As a visioning exercise the proposed process is not planned to focus on the feasibility or business case for a given mode. Considerable study work has been completed over the years and there exists a strong rationale and public support for both the restoration of rail service and conversion of the rail line to an active transportation trail. This process would not determine what is the highest value or sole use, rather it would confirm the value of the Corridor to the communities within the Comox Valley and highlight the broader range of enhancement opportunities it can help support.
  - New technologies, changing economic conditions and other influences are likely to continue to disrupt the status quo and shift personal mobility and goods movement into the future. For this reason, the proposed workplan seeks to consider how best to accommodate a broad range of transportation functions and other interests, instead of seeking to determine the sole function. This means consideration of both traditional transportation functions – such as rail service and active transportation – as well as other non-transportation opportunities that could range from parks and open space, utilities and housing.
- Subject to the Board's endorsement of the workplan, staff will seek third-party consulting support to action the workplan over the course of this year.

Prepared by:

***J. Martens***

---

Jake Martens  
General Manager of  
Corporate Services

**Government and Community Interests Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

Island Corridor Foundation	✓
K'ómoks First Nation	✓

Attachments:      Appendix A – Island Rail Corridor Planning Exercise Workplan

## Appendix A – Island Rail Corridor Planning Exercise Workplan

Task Description	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	2025 Q1
<b>1: Planning Context</b>					
Review and analysis of relevant pre-existing plans and studies e.g. Regional Growth Strategy, Official Community Plans, regional and local transportation plans, corridor-specific assessments and evaluations					
Engagement with K'ómoks First Nation					
<b>2: Corridor Review</b>					
Comprehensive mapping exercise and identification of corridor encumbrances					
Identification and review of historic uses and current proposed uses and activities, including: rail, active transportation, utilities (water, sewer)					
Review of crossing and constrained locations e.g. watercourse (trestles) and road crossings					
Inventory of surrounding lands and relevant future development plans					
Review of parallel corridors including Highway 19, Highway 19A, regional/municipal roads and utility corridors that could be utilized for certain functions					
Engagement with K'ómoks First Nation					
Collaboration with partner governments, agencies and interested community parties					

Task Description	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	2025 Q1
<b>3. Options Consideration</b>					
Assess the functional characteristics of each activity and the opportunities to accommodate within the corridor					
Detail the possible activities that the corridor may help support					
Consider parallel corridors and the potential to accommodate linear functions (transportation, utilities) along parallel routes					
Assess the opportunity for corridor activities to enhance surrounding communities and properties.					
Engagement with and consideration by K'ómoks First Nation and CVRD Board					
<b>4: Framework Development</b>					
Development of a framework to articulate the preliminary vision for the corridor, including visioning statements as well as objectives and goals					
Collaboration with partner governments, agencies and interested community parties					
Engagement between and consideration by CVRD and K'ómoks First Nation					
<b>5: Long-Term Strategy</b>					
Development of corridor strategy to articulate the plan to achieve the vision					

Task Description	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	2025 Q1
Development of technical report to detail the plan and policy research, process and findings from the technical review, the various corridor activities, and key directions					
<b>6: Engagement</b>					
Inform community and partners of process outcomes and next steps					