



## E&N RAIL TRAIL: FIRST-HAND LOOK

# Exploring a new path



DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST

Members of the Capital Regional District parks committee tour the E&N rail line near the Four Mile Pub in View Royal yesterday. A trail for cyclists and walkers is to be built along the rail line. From left: Oak Bay Mayor Christopher Causton, CRD chairman Geoff Young, View Royal councillor John Rogers and CRD parks project manager Jeff Ward.

## Politicians track obstacles from a \$9-million shortfall to tough terrain, but the push is on for extensive trail

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Times Colonist

Trying figure out how to get the most for their stretched dollars, municipal politicians took a first-hand look at sections of the proposed E&N Rail Trail yesterday.

They face a tough task. Not only is the \$20.2-million project short \$9 million in funding, work also has to be co-ordinated with major road projects planned in View Royal, Esquimalt and Victoria.

That has Oak Bay Mayor Christopher Causton, who chairs the Capital Regional District parks committee, looking for consensus among municipalities over what sections can and should be developed first.

Causton, who took part in a bus tour to key spots along the proposed trail, is suggesting the project be

split into two phases.

He's also suggesting that bids be sought for the work now, because the economic climate might bring a good price for the job. "But we've got a lot of constraints and we've got a budget that is showing that we're short several million dollars on this project," he said.

The plan ultimately would see a 17.5-kilometre biking and walking trail wind its way through five municipalities, extending from the Johnson Street Bridge in Victoria to Goldstream Park in Langford.

The trail would run along the E & N rail line, linking downtown Victoria to destinations such as Thetis Lake and Goldstream Park through Esquimalt and View Royal.

The trail, with an initial cost estimate of \$11.3 million, was to be financed almost entirely through fed-

eral gas tax dollars. But once detailed engineering was completed, the cost estimate almost doubled to \$20.2 million.

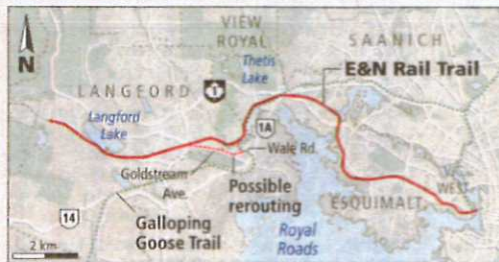
Causton would still like to see the trail substantially completed by 2010.

The original plan was to start the trail in Victoria and proceed down Esquimalt Road. But now that Victoria is considering replacement or refurbishment of the Johnson Street Bridge, that plan is uncertain.

The new idea is to start the trail work where the rail line crosses Esquimalt Road heading into Vic West.

Road improvements in other municipalities could also affect the trail.

Esquimalt is planning major work on the Colville-Admirals intersection and View Royal has received funding for road improvements to the Island Highway near the Four Mile



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Pub. Both projects affect the rail trail and while they could provide opportunities for cost savings, they also have an impact on trail construction timing.

Particularly daunting is a one-kilometre stretch in Langford in the Millstream-Atkins area estimated to cost \$4 million. That's because extensive retaining walls have to be built. To avoid that cost, it has been suggested the trail could temporarily tie into the Galloping Goose Trail and then onto bike lanes on Wale Road and Goldstream Avenue.

But Langford councillors Lanny Seaton and Lillian Szpak, both on yesterday's tour, are resisting that plan. They said work on the trail should start in the West Shore and work toward downtown, and there shouldn't be a detour.

"That's not even an option, putting it on Goldstream Avenue," said Seaton. "You're putting people right into traffic."

CRD parks staff are to report back within a month on options, potential funding sources and potential cost savings.