

Okanagan Landing makes trail tracks

Okanagan Landing Trail

By Debbie Clark, Ribbons of Green Director



Paul Gibson cycles the Okanagan Landing Trail every day from the airport to downtown, even in the recent -17 weather

If you lived in the Greater Vernon area in the early 90's, you will remember a time when our communities were not very friendly to cyclists and trail enthusiasts. Planning and development of trails have come a long way since then, and today's column recognizes one of our major urban connector routes, the **Okanagan Landing Trail**.

In the early 90's, our community's first trail system plan, called '*Ribbons of Green*', envisioned connections between major community amenities, including routes from the city centre to Swan Lake, Okanagan Lake and Kalamalka Lake. At that time, the Okanagan Landing Trail was just in the works. A 10.6 metre wide right-of-way had been created for a future linear park and footpath between 34th Street (near Polson Park) and 41st Street, and 25th Avenue was being redesigned to incorporate a bike path.

The earliest major trail to be developed from our city centre was the Okanagan Landing Trail, now a 5.5 km separated multi-use pathway that starts in Polson Park and continues alongside Okanagan Landing Road and ends at Cummins Road. This trail is popular with pedestrians and cyclists, and provides a safe route for commuting and exercise. It is easily accessible for people with mobility challenges, parents pushing strollers, young children and seniors.

The Okanagan Landing Trail also provides a safe route for hundreds of students attending Ellison and Fulton schools. Beyond the end of the Okanagan Landing Trail, a widened paved shoulder along Lakeshore Road and Okanagan Landing Road connects with Okanagan Landing School and adjacent neighbourhoods.

The vision is to eventually extend the Okanagan Landing Trail and grow the network:

1. From Cummins Road to Paddlewheel Park,



2. Along Vernon Creek to Lakeshore Road and Fulton School, and
3. From Kin Beach along the lakeshore to Paddlewheel Park.

This will result in 7 km of connected trail, with little elevation change, and accessing many of the residential and business areas, and recreational amenities of Okanagan Landing.

The City of Vernon has also made good progress on the major routes that will eventually link Swan Lake and northern commercial/residential areas to the urban hub in Polson Park. A long-awaited connection between downtown Vernon and Coldstream/Kalamalka Lake is also taking shape. This fall, the city approved funding for major upgrades to Kalamalka Lake Road, from 14th Avenue to the Coldstream border, including a separated multi-use path to be built in 2017. This trail will link Vernon's residents, and hotels and restaurants with the Okanagan Rail Trail, and its connections to spectacular scenery and communities to the south.

The Greater Vernon trail system is continuing to grow, and branch out to our many great natural and cultural amenities. The major north-south and east-west routes like Okanagan Landing and Kalamalka Road Trails will play a critical role to make sure we can get there safely, using human power.