**Name:** Keith Lay

**Residence:** Porter Creek

**Presenting for:** Active Trails Whitehorse Association (ATWA)

**Topic:** Whitehorse South Draft Trail Plan

I have provided all members of City Council with a document that addressed and *questioned* some of the comments made by administration at last Monday’s City Council meeting, concerning the Whitehorse South Trail Plan. Hopefully, you had an opportunity to read that material.

I was surprised that at the aforementioned City Council meeting, administration did not mention that council could ensure that the proposed and to be constructed so-called non-motorized trails in Whitehorse South, could be truly non-motorized in summer and winter, ***if***the City went through the process of adding them to the Excluded trails section of the Snowmobile Bylaw. (See <https://www.whitehorse.ca/home/showpublisheddocument/74/636668174780630000>.)

You may recall that the Whistle Bend Perimeter Trail went through this process to establish it as a non-motorized (summer and winter) trail.

The lack of understanding by City Council, the press, and the general public of the above requirement led to total confusion surrounding the Whistle Bend Perimeter trail, and resulted in additional costs to the City, needless public conflict, and much waste of everyone’s valuable time.

Outside of established ski trail areas there are only three trails listed in aforementioned *Excluded trail* section: Millennium Trail, Birch Loop Trail, and (as mentioned) the Whistle Bend Paved Perimeter Trail.

In our view, the City often discounts the numerous studies and plans (including the current OCP) that have suggested that citizens would like to see at least some separation between motorized and non-motorized users. (References are provided at the end of this document.)

The City (in theory) designs motorized multiple use trails in order to accommodate both motorized and non-motorized users, but primarily for motorized users. They have to be built to accommodate the largest vehicle that is legally allowed to operate on such trails. Today, that may well be a snowmobile conversion vehicle.**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

There has to be room for two such vehicles to pass each other. There have to be good sightlines to ensure vehicles can see each other well in advance of contact. Trail grade steepness and surface must also be considered.

When you add non-motorized users to the mix it is obvious that other design features would have to be accommodated. Safety is of prime importance in the design of such trails.

It would seem likely that those who would most enjoy MMU trails are motorized users, as most of the design requirements are done for them and their very expensive vehicles, which for snowmobiles apparently average around $15,000. (See <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/as-snowmobile-sales-skyrocket-dealers-having-a-tough-time-keeping-new-machines-in-stock-1.5214320>.)

Citizens want an equitable trail system, which includes non-motorized (summer and winter) trails. The long and involved fight to maintain the Rotary Centennial Bridge and adjacent Millennium Trail, as truly non-motorized, is witness to this desire. (2015)

Certainly there are places where both groups can operate together where trail design allows, but there are trails that should be free of such use in order to ensure they are not widened over time, and become susceptible to more machine use. **[[2]](#footnote-2)**

As well, safety issues are compounded for both motorized and non-motorized users, when you allow snow machines on trails ***not designed*** for such use. If safety is so important to the City, then how in good conscience can it permit such use on so-called non-motorized trails that are ***not so designed***?

And, surely people have a right to enjoy a few quiet and more intimate trails where they are not exposed to machines. This is particularly important in areas close to residential development.

The current 2020 Trail Plan’s ***new definition*** of a non-motorized multiple use trail, clearly indicates that the public expects such trails to be non-motorized.

The definition does not say that such trails are to *accommodate snowmobiles in winter*. However, for all intents and purposes that is what the City will be saying to Whitehorse South residents, if it does not include such trails in the Excluded trails section of the Snowmobile Bylaw.

It is absolutely ridiculous that one has to go through a Snowmobile Bylaw in order to establish a truly non-motorized trail in the City of Whitehorse. Changing the bylaw to address this situation is one that should be considered by the current City Council.

However, for now City Council needs to take the appropriate course of action and place the “proposed and to be constructed" so-called non-motorized trails in Whitehorse South into the Excluded trails section of the Snowmobile Bylaw (Schedule “E”), and give the citizens of Whitehorse South hope that there is a place for truly non-motorized trails in the City of Whitehorse.

Our second concern relates to “out and away” trails. Surely the City could have indicated on the draft trail map those trails in Whitehorse South currently under consideration for such distinction, so that residents could have provided comments on their potential effectiveness and possible negative impacts on homeowners.

Doing so might have prevented any possible dissent when the new MMU Trail Map is published on which “out and away” trails will be identified.

And finally, we are still concerned about the proposed development in McIntyre Creek Park. No explanation has been given as to why this particular section of the park is being proposed for development.

We are told that future development would “fall in line with other development policies,” but this provides little insurance that development will not take place before we have a management plan for the park.

We feel this proposed development should be dropped from the trail plan.

Thank you,

Keith Lay (ATWA)

www.activetwa.org

**City of Whitehorse survey results and neighbourhood plans** **indicate that the majority of residents support the restriction of snowmobiles to designated motorized trails**

* **2010 Riverdale Neighbourhood Plan:**Section 1.5.3, Questionnaire outcome (page 9)

<https://www.activetwa.org/uploads/2/2/7/6/22767404/0_2010_riverdaleneighbplan.pdf>  
   
“Motorized recreational vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles) were identified as a major point of contention in the community. Many feel disturbed by motorized activity and identify it as a safety issue, particularly in regards to children. The consensus seems to be that laws regarding these vehicles are not being respected and must be more stringently enforced.”  
  
“Furthermore, trails need to be strongly designated as motorized or non-motorized. Many also expressed concern regarding the erosion of trails, and general environmental damage caused by these vehicles.”

* **2010 Whitehorse Official Community Plan** section 18.5.1:

<https://www.whitehorse.ca/home/showdocument?id=10347>  
  
“Where feasible, consideration shall be made to separate multi-use trails (which accommodate motorized and non-motorized recreation) from non-motorized trails.  Future multi-use trail development shall avoid environmentally sensitive areas wherever possible.”

* **2011 Whitehorse Snowmobile Survey** (statistically valid) results:

Snowmobile Bylaw Report, July 2011, by Bylaw Services, page 54:  
<https://www.activetwa.org/uploads/2/2/7/6/22767404/110701_snowmobile_bylaw_report_july_2011.pdf>  
​  
“It is important to separate motorized and non-motorized trail use: 59% agree 23% disagree.” (This survey was part of the 2011-2012 public consultation process for the new Snowmobile Bylaw.)  
  
**2014 Hillcrest Neighbourhood Plan** - section 3.4.4.3:   
<https://hillcrestcommunity.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/hillcrest-plan-final.pdf>  
   
“The City should continue to explore methods such as improved signage, barriers (Figure 11), and compliance monitoring, to ensure All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobiles are used only on trails where motorized vehicles are permitted.”

* **2015-2050 Whitehorse Sustainability Plan:**

<http://www.whitehorse.ca/home/showdocument?id=5313>  
   
“Manage greenspace to rehabilitate, limit access, and limit fragmentation”  (page 20)

* **2015** **ORV impacts and management measures** - Survey conducted by Yukon conservation Society, Friends of McIntyre Creek, Porter Creek Community Association

<http://yukonconservation.org/docs/2016_Porter_Creek_Range_Point_Whistle_Bend_Takhini_Trail_Plan_Survey_-_feedback.pdf>  
  
Respondents made numerous comments on the need to keep motorized vehicles off non-motorized trails summer and winter.  
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* **2016 Whistle Bend, Porter Creek, Takhini survey**:

May 2017 “Porter Creek/Whistle Bend/Takhini/Range Point Trail Plan Report:  
<http://whitehorse.ca/Home/ShowDocument?id=8364>  (report is on pages 17 to 24 of agenda package)

1. “SNOWMOBILE CONVERSION VEHICLE” means a vehicle designed to be capable of conversion to a snowmobile by the repositioning, removal or addition of parts, which may or may not include steering skis; [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The inconsistency developed partly because some believe that due to snow cover, snowmobiles have less impact on the landscape than ATVs. Research indicates significant snowmobile impacts. Snow depth varies each year, and changes throughout the winter. Factors such as degree of slope, aspect, height of land, temperature variation, and vegetation cover all affect snow depth. Therefore, snow depth is never the same in all areas of the city. Vegetation located above the snow snaps easily in the cold. If snowmobilers were required to stay on designated motorized trails and out of open spaces and greenbelts (as are ATVs), then damage would be reduced, particularly to narrow single-track trails. It would also reduce user conflict, improve safety, and make for a more equitable trail network.  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)