

January 9, 2023 (City Council Delegate Presentation)

My name is Keith Lay. I live in Porter Creek. I am an associate with Active Trails Whitehorse Association.

The 2020 Trail Plan is a trail plan for the entire city, not just specific neighbourhoods. City administration and consultants conducted one of the best reviews of any city plan that I have seen. No one can deny they were not given numerous opportunities to participate.

Over 1400 citizens filled out the draft plan survey, First Nations provided input, as did nine stakeholder groups including (among others) the Klondike Snowmobile Association, the Contagious Mountain Bike Club, Whitehorse Walks, the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club and ourselves, Active Trails Whitehorse Association.

The definitions of a Motorized Multiple Use Trail and that of Non-Motorized Multiple Use Trail were clearly defined in the approved plan.

So, councillors should not be concerned that the public has not been consulted as to the issue of trail use. Citizens want trails that are open to a variety of motorized users, but they also want trails that are open to a variety of non-motorized users. To clarify, they want both motorized trails, “and” trails that are free from motorized use throughout the entire year.

The Snowmobile Bylaw makes it virtually impossible, as council has recently demonstrated in its decisions with regard to Whitehorse North trails, to provide citizens with neighbourhood trails that are truly free from motorized use.

Two years ago, Councillor Boyd told citizens that “administration [had] confirmed that a top priority [would be] to identify the policies and bylaws that [needed] to be updated” to reflect the intentions of the 2020 Trail Plan, something the Trail Plan said was one of the “key areas [to be] addressed.” (City Council meeting of Dec. 7, 2020 and p. 3 of 2020 Trail Plan)

Obviously, this has not been done with regard to the Snowmobile Bylaw, and it is this issue with which all councillors should be concerned.

When the trail plans for both Whitehorse South and Whitehorse North first came up for discussion, ATWA pointed out that the public was not made aware that despite the 2020 Trail Plan’s definition of a non-motorized multiple use trail, in order to actually create one, the trail or trails in question would have to be added to the “Excluded Trails” section of the Snowmobile Bylaw.

The draft trail plan map for Whitehorse North indicated that two trails (coloured red) were being proposed as non-motorized multiple use trails.

In the bottom corner of the map, in extremely small print, reference is made to the Snowmobile Bylaw, but unfortunately there is no mention of what has to be done to make a trail truly non-motorized in our city.

If cognizant of the 2020 Trail Plan, you would probably think that as the city is proposing that the two red trails be non-motorized, that they would be non-motorized all year round to agree with that plan's definition of a non-motorized multiple use trail. After all, "no" is supposed to mean "no."

However, if cognizant of the contents of the Snowmobile Bylaw, one would assume that if the city is indeed proposing the trails to be non-motorized all year round as per the 2020 Trail Plan, it would then ask council to amend the bylaw to include that trail in its "Excluded Trails" section. Unfortunately, the city had no intention of doing this, so why did it give citizens the expectation that it would?

All the other trails on the Whitehorse North Trail map that have not been designed and designated by council as motorized multiple use trails, are by definition non-motorized multiple use trails.

So, in the end these two "red" trails are simply non-motorized multiple use trails open to snowmobile use in the winter, as long as that use does not damage vegetation or ground, but closed to ATV use in the summer.

When City Council approved the trail plan for Whitehorse North, it also approved the two red trails as non-motorized multiple use trails, which they already were!

So, one has to wonder what the point of this trail planning exercise was, as it seems to be nothing more than a process devoted to designating motorized trails.

We ask City Council to honour the 2020 Trail Plan by updating the Snowmobile Bylaw "to reflect the intentions of the 2020 Trail Plan," with regard to its definition of a non-motorized multiple use trail.

Thank you!

Keith Lay (Active Trails Whitehorse Association)

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