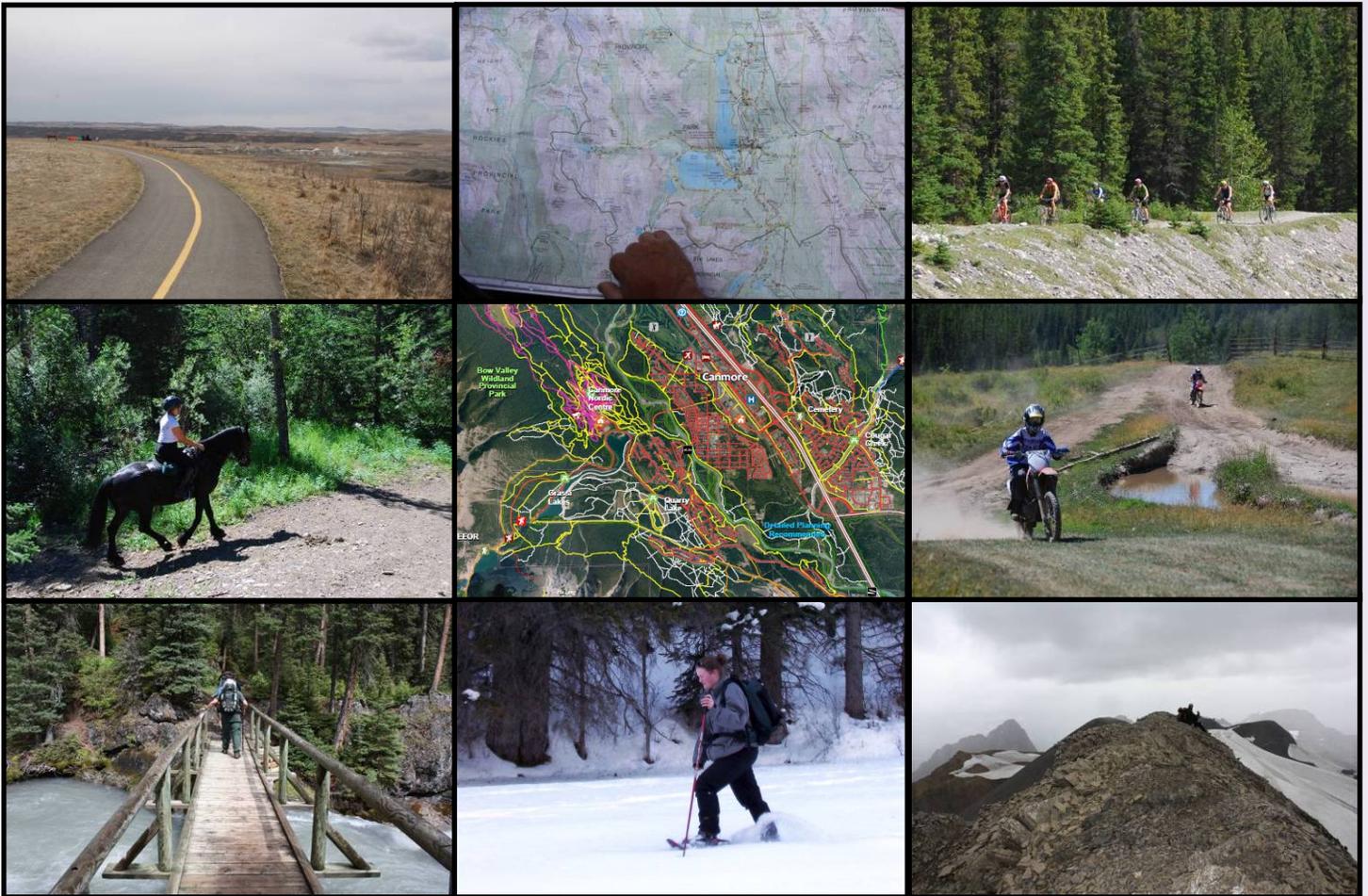


# KANANASKIS RECREATIONAL CORRIDORS SYSTEM PLANNING

## NEW CORRIDOR & NETWORK PROPOSALS



Version: 1.1

## Introduction to the Kananaskis Recreational Corridors System

The Kananaskis region offers by far the greatest and most extensively recognized and supported recreational corridor system in all of Alberta. These corridors consist of a wide spectrum of land and water-based recreational features and experiences: from urban regional commuter pathways to remote wilderness scrambling routes. Thousands of kilometres of recreation corridors are currently recognized and managed within the regional system with thousands more scattered across the landscape.

The region has become a very popular recreation destination for many levels of users, with some of the facilities even providing Olympic-level opportunities for sport competition and training. Millions of Albertans and visitors to the province use these features and facilities each year to experience the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual benefits that they provide. The Government of Alberta has acknowledged that there is a need to provide more opportunities for desirable outdoor experiences within a wide variety of settings and challenge levels. It has also been recognized however that the proliferation and unfettered growth of unrecognized trails and routes within Kananaskis has created significant issues related to wildlife, vegetation, erosion, user conflicts and safety and liability. The purpose therefore of proper system planning is to ensure that the system provides the widest variety of high quality recreational opportunities and experiences that are ecologically, socially and operationally sustainable.

## Purpose of the Process for Developing Proposals for New Projects

The process for guiding and evaluating proposals and plans for new desirable recreational corridor and network opportunities follows a sequential course of actions that are designed to guide their proper planning and development (*Figure 1*). This process should be used for recreation corridors in new areas, as well as more controversial and larger scale projects, e.g. trail network planning. Proposals dealing with corridor upgrades, short linkages or realignments and other relatively minor infrastructure changes should follow the *Existing Corridor and Network Improvements Process*.

The intent is to have a more consistent and rational mechanism for collaboration between the various government ministries, stakeholders and interested individuals to effectively plan, develop and manage the system. Having a more collaborative and transparent process that proponents and planners can follow should provide a greater level of confidence that everyone's efforts are meaningful and moving toward success.

Following this systematic process will help to significantly reduce the risk of a proposal being rejected or authoritative actions being taken, such as enforcement and prosecution over illegal trails and unapproved enhancements. It must however be recognized that any project or action could be amended, postponed or cancelled at any time during the process given reasonable cause, including but not limited to new information, conditions or circumstances. For example, a project would be delayed and could be altered should historical resources be identified during later stages of the process. The appropriate authority and level of approval at each stage may depend on the location(s), i.e. land manager(s), and the level of complexity and/or controversy of the proposal.

## Guidance and Expectations Prior to Initial Proposal

The following is a guideline process for proponents looking to propose a new recreational corridor or network, specifically new pathways and trails to be added to the system.

### *Framing an Idea*

Ideas for new recreational corridors and/or networks may come from a variety of sources. An inventory of the existing recognized and unrecognized system will provide many of the recommendations for new developments in order to respond to recreational demand gaps or deal with areas receiving pressure to expand. Designated trail authorities or other external individuals or groups will also have ideas for improving or expanding the system. The use of GOA planning resources may be available pending the complexity and priority of the project and the availability of resources and staff. Such opportunities would likely be incorporated into broader land use planning initiatives, such as management planning.

### *Initial Information Package*

The initial information package, as supplied by the Government of Alberta, consists of a map and supporting documents indicating the various priority areas for Kananaskis. The information will typically include:

- Sensitive and restricted areas for development, including rules and policies
- Areas that may support additional recreational development or use
- Existing pathways, trails, routes and infrastructure locations

It will be the responsibility of the proponent to understand the steps of the process and the associated expertise and potential costs that may be required. The information package will likely evolve and change over time as changes occur and new information is incorporated.

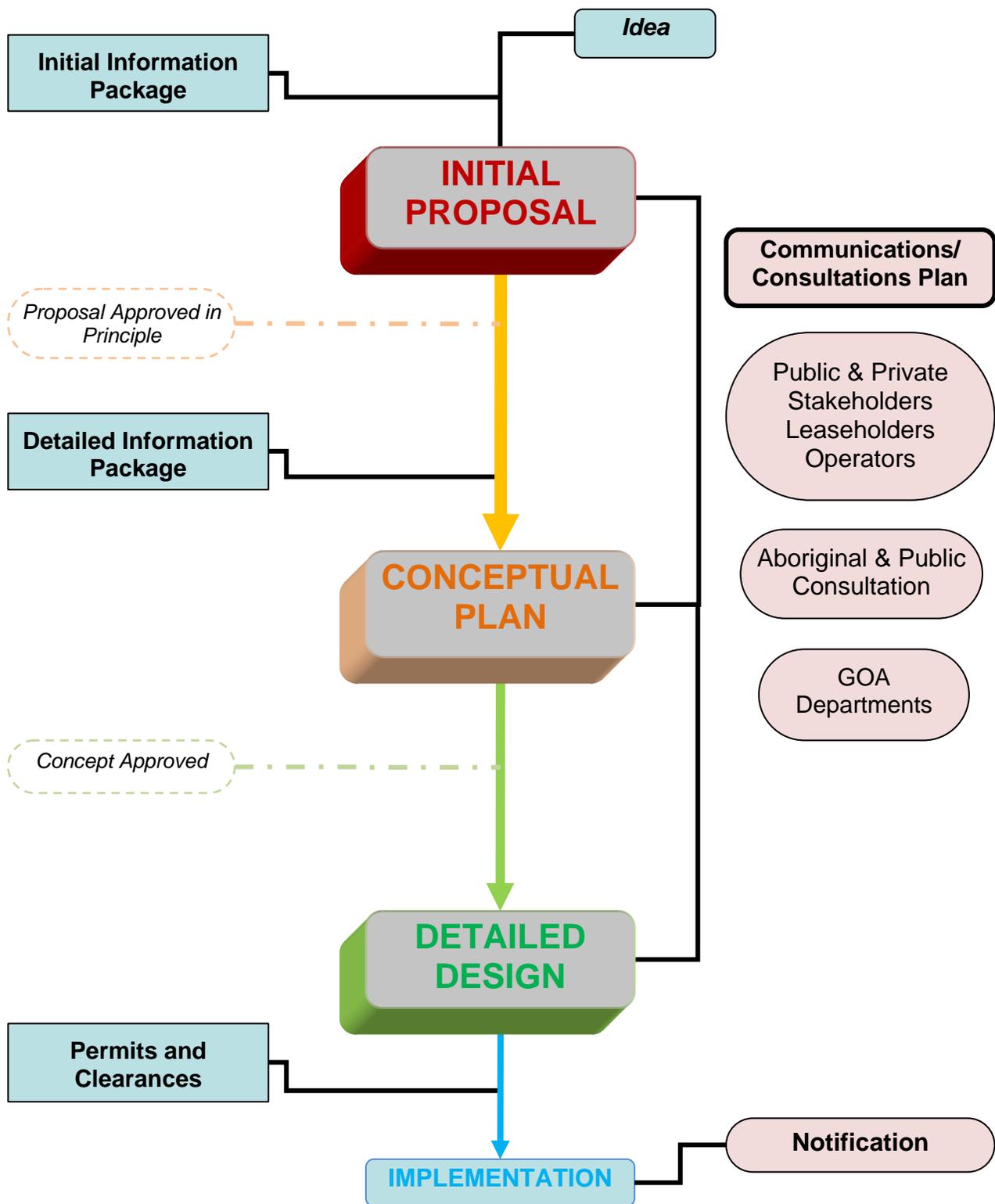
### *Proposal Approval in Principle*

The decision for endorsing the initial proposal to proceed to a concept design level will reside with the Kananaskis Trails Committee (KTC).

The KTC will not generally evaluate partially completed proposals however the KTC may approve a proposal in principle if it meets the mandatory criteria and satisfactorily addresses the other criteria listed in Appendix A. It is the expectation that proponents will provide an adequate amount of rationale (as outlined in the *Initial Proposal Screening Checklist*) to support the basis for the project.

Proponents are encouraged to approach the KTC to identify any items that should be addressed in the initial proposal, especially for any large and potentially controversial projects. For example, the *West Bragg Creek All-Season Trails Plan* was a significant planning initiative for an entire network of trails. It had a detailed *Terms of Reference* to outline the details for developing and consulting on the conceptual plan and included the creation of a public advisory committee, issue identification and timeline for completion.

Figure 1: New Recreation Corridor and Network Proposals Process



## Stage 1- Initial Proposal

The initial proposal is a basic outline of the broad scope and rationale for a particular pathway network or trail project. The purpose of this stage is to provide enough information for a coarse level screening to get a general sense of whether or not the proposal is appropriate and should move forward, as well as to establish what information and actions will be needed to complete the project.

### Decision Considerations on Initial Proposal

The initial proposal, including a map illustrating the general location of the proposed pathway or trail, will be screened against the following coarse criteria (*Stage 1: Initial Proposal Screening Checklist, Appendix A*):

- *Complies with sensitive areas and zoning*

The initial information package includes mapping that illustrates the relative ecological sensitivity of each area. Some areas may have restrictions on trail density or design (e.g. may perpendicularly cross wildlife corridor but not be parallel) where others may support further trail densification and use. It is expected that proponents will try to avoid areas of higher sensitivity where possible. Proposed new corridors that need to go through the most sensitive and/or restricted areas will most likely not be approved.

- *Acceptable use under land use type*

The primary intended use and any expected uses of the proposed recreation corridor or network must respect all legal and/or policy requirements. This includes compliance with applicable legislation, regulations, or policies associated with the land use area. For example, a trail for motorized dirt bike use will not be approved in an area that does not allow for motorized uses.

- *Compliments objectives/management direction for area*

Proposals should comply with the current management direction for an area, e.g. park management plan, access management plan, etc., unless the intent of the proposal provides adequate cause to change such direction. Changes to existing management direction however will be subject to a more extensive level of public and Aboriginal consultation. The proposal should also consider existing recreational activities and experiences in the area and identify any positive or negative impacts that are anticipated. Where management direction does not exist or specific interpretation is not applicable, direction will default to what is consistent with existing policy.

- *Has an appropriate trail management objective*

The proposal should have a clear trail management objective that identifies the primary intended uses and experiences that will guide the planning and design of the project. The purpose of having a trail management objective is to establish who the primary users and what the desired recreational experiences are intended to be.

- *Enhances existing recreational opportunities and experiences in the area*

Proposals that enhance, or at minimum don't adversely impact, existing recreational opportunities and experiences in the area may proceed and may be given a higher priority. Providing a new recreational opportunity or experience should generally not result in the degradation or displacement of an existing opportunity or experience.

- *Is it needed, not a similar experience in proximity*

Proposals should try not to duplicate similar experiences in close proximity. As stated in the main objects of the planning process, the intent is to create a more sustainable and effective recreation corridor system in Kananaskis. The focus should be on providing a more meaningful, desirable and high quality system rather than focusing solely on quantity. In some cases, an expansion or reorganization of an existing network of corridors that provides similar experiences may be a priority if there is a determined need to provide that extra capacity. Opportunities for new unique experiences will be given greater consideration if they meet an expressed need and can be developed to be environmentally, socially and operationally sustainable.

The primary intent is to provide the widest variety of recreational opportunities and experiences possible requiring the least amount of resources to manage. Inventory of the recognized recreational corridors system should identify gaps and deficiencies within the region and may be a source of support for future projects.

- *Links to existing infrastructure, staging areas*

Proposals should utilize existing infrastructure and staging areas where possible. Anticipated change in use or improvements at existing infrastructure locations should also be generally identified. Details on actual required upgrades or new facilities will be addressed during the conceptual planning phase.

- *Identifies other potential conflicts, interests*

The proposal should identify potential conflicts with other recreational and non-recreational, commercial and industrial interests in the planning area. This should identify what groups or individuals need to be involved in the development of the project.

### Consultation and Notification

Consultation and collaboration between the proponents, GOA, leaseholders and stakeholders will often be required throughout the process in order to come to a mutually agreeable product. The level of consultation will be dependent on the level of details required to address the anticipated issues outlined in the proposal phase. For more complex proposals, a *Terms of Reference* that outlines in detail the process and procedures of a plan for consultation may be required. All projects will also require notification to affected stakeholders and users of the area prior to any construction.

## Stage 2- Conceptual Plan

Outlining the conceptual idea is a critical component of planning future infrastructure and facility development. Conceptual plans provide more description on where infrastructure or facility development would most likely make sense to achieve the desired outcomes while considering the current environmental, social and economic settings.

Conceptual plans may also help to identify and address areas of concern and to concentrate any *Historical Resources Impact Assessments* and *Environmental Reviews* that may need to be completed before moving toward the detailed design stage. Although not generally part of building the concept, any significant historical or ecological values found could impact the overall design considerably, if not cancel the project altogether, if preventative or mitigative measures cannot be done.

It is recommended that sufficient time and resources be committed to this stage of planning, including consultation with local operators, stakeholders and users, to minimize the potential of the project being delayed or even cancelled at the concept approval or design stage. It will be up to the proponent to prove that sufficient efforts have been made to collect and utilize the best available information and to work with all of the affected groups and individuals.

### Detailed Information Package

The detailed information package consists of a series of maps and supporting documents related to the proposed area. The information may include, but not limited to the following information, mapping and data sets:

- Park Management Plans and other public information, e.g. visitor statistics and surveys, if available
- Forest Management Area Plans and associated operational plans
- Fisheries and water course sensitive areas
- Existing leases and dispositions
- Oil and gas infrastructure
- Grazing allotments and trap lines
- Known sensitive, endangered or other species-at-risk areas

The detailed information package will likely adapt and change over time as new information is updated or added. Other data or screening information may be required by the proponent for the area, such as initial historical resources screening by the *Ministry of Alberta Culture and Community Services*. Some information may be sensitive in nature and therefore may require confidentiality and disclosure agreement prior to any use.

It will be the responsibility of the proponent to incorporate the information into the process and into the conceptual plan. The associated expertise and potential costs that may be required to design best practices will also be the responsibility of the proponent.

## Decision Considerations on Conceptual Plan

The conceptual plan, including mapping and any conceptual illustrations of proposed pathway and trail locations, will be evaluated against the following criteria (*Conceptual Plan Consent Checklist, Appendix A*):

- *Avoids sensitive areas*

The proposed pathways or trails avoid sensitive features and areas where possible, including but not limited to all known water courses and riparian areas, fish spawning areas, areas of high historical and cultural resource potential, areas of species-at-risk and any other known or anticipated sensitive areas related to the proposed development.

- *Identifies and assesses resource values*

The plan must identify and assess the natural, cultural, recreational, commercial and industrial values of the area, as well as any known or potential positive and negative impacts that may occur as a result of the project. The conceptual plan should provide sufficient information regarding these values, as well as indicate, in general terms, any potential options for mitigation, avoidance and/or compensation if required.

The purpose is to promote positive outcomes and minimize negative consequences from the project on other values through proper network planning and design. Specific terms and actions to implement the plan, such as elements like fencing and gate locations will typically be addressed at the detailed design stage and/or when precise trail locations are being discussed.

- *Minimizes and mitigates disturbance, where possible*

As a principle for planning and development, the project seeks to minimize and mitigate the footprint or disturbance on the land base. The plan should strive to integrate development into existing disturbance, where applicable and appropriate, and attempt to limit the amount of tree removal and habitat fragmentation. Opportunities to rehabilitate existing undesirable pathways, trails or other developments should also be included in order to better assess the cumulative impact of the plan.

- *The proposed pathways or trails are sustainable*

The plan should demonstrate how it will function as an ecologically, socially and operationally sustainable recreational corridor and/or network. The conceptual planning process should generally identify and take into account areas that are susceptible to wet and/or eroding conditions, as well as to acknowledge probable requirements for ongoing operation and maintenance. In many cases, changes and tweaks to the specific alignment and build of the pathway or trail can address these issues during the detailed design stage. It is however recommended that proactive and preventative steps be taken during this stage to minimize the need for potentially significant alterations to the plan in the later stage, especially if appropriate and feasible mitigative measures can't be applied.

For example, an entire trail needs to be relocated because the conceptual plan did not consider that the route runs straight through an area that is known to have seasonal flooding.

Opportunities to make a recreational corridor network more efficient or effective may also be identified.

- *Addresses public safety and liability*

The plan identifies and outlines how the project will address existing and anticipated public safety and liability issues. If applicable, the plan may tie into existing management and operation plans related to public safety and emergency response.

- *Outlines anticipated management requirements*

The plan outlines any required or anticipated management actions. Such actions may include, but are not limited to, seasonal trail closures or increased monitoring and enforcement. General information on what operational, educational and interpretive signage is anticipated and how they will be developed and used should also be provided.

- *Adequate features and experience*

The plan incorporates the initial purpose of the initial proposal, trail management objective, by delivering adequate features and setting conditions related to the desired experiences. Simply, does the conceptual plan meet the objectives and requirements of the intended recreational use and users? For example, a mountain bike trail would be expected to incorporate more highly technical terrain and skill elements if being developed to meet the needs of expert riders.

- *Encourages shared and multi-use of system*

The plan promotes cooperation between the different uses and users and attempts to determine possible options and solutions. This may also need to tie into anticipated future management requirements where programs or services may be required to address the issues, such as user etiquette and management signage.

It is assumed that best practices, for all the considerations above, will be built into the conceptual plan and refined through the detailed design stage.

### Concept Plan Consent

The KTC will review Conceptual Plans using the fine criteria outlined above and listed in Appendix A. The level of consultation and stakeholder engagement expected will be dependent on the nature and complexity of the proposed project. Prior to the initiation of the detailed design, a summary of all public and Aboriginal consultation, as well as any significant concerns identified by affected stakeholders must be completed and, where appropriate, mitigation measures identified and changes made to the plan to address those issues.

### Stage 3- Detailed Design

The detailed designing phase is intended to be the part of the process when the pathways and trails are better defined and become more formalized. This is also the stage when specific operational and inter-user issues will be addressed in detail, such as fencing requirements, signage, infrastructure placement, guidelines, etc.

Detailed designs provide a lower level schematic of what infrastructure or facility development will actually be developed and where with respect to environmental, social and economic conditions. The design should take into consideration best practices for placement, construction and ongoing management.

Proponents will need to work closely with the respective agencies and lease holders through this stage to ensure that areas of concerns are avoided, where possible, and that appropriate mitigative measures are taken where needed. It is the responsibility of the proponent to negotiate and acquire any agreements, permits or clearances that may be required.

#### Decision Considerations on Detailed Design

The detailed design, including the final detailed mapping and illustrations of proposed pathway, trail and infrastructure alignments and schematics, will be evaluated against the following criteria (*Detailed Design Approval Checklist, Appendix A*):

- *Site-specific details are provided and considerations related to negative ecological and social impacts during construction and operation are addressed.*

The final detailed design should provide enough detail to illustrate how engineering designs and physical controls have been used to offset any adverse impacts to the social and ecological settings, both during construction and once operational.

- *All significant GOA and stakeholder concerns have been addressed and any other potential or irresolvable issues acknowledged.*

The weight of this consideration will be reflective of the of public and stakeholder interest in the project, as well as the level of controversy and issues identified earlier in the process. It is not expected that all issues between uses and users will be completely resolved; however, does the proponent reasonably attempt to address the issues identified and have all potential options been exhausted?

- *All required permits and clearances have been acquired; EIA, HRIA, etc*

Pending the level of anticipated issues with the project, approval of the detailed design may be given prior to the required permits being acquired. In some cases, approval of the detailed design may be necessary prior to application for permits and clearances. The intent is to ensure the design avoids significant areas and features where possible and that the identified conditions and guidelines are considered and can be met.

- *Identifies other required infrastructure to be completed, e.g. crossings*

Have the type and location of all required crossing structures and drainage culverts been identified. Furthermore, does the design address all other applicable infrastructure requirements such as fencing, gates, signage, parking, washrooms, etc...? The detailed design should indicate the responsible group for each and requirements and relative timeframe to be completed.

- *The schematics of the pathway or trail are consistent with applicable standards and best practices.*

Some general considerations may include: are the specific details of the pathway or trail within the specifications of Alberta and Kananaskis Region trail standards and guidelines; will they meet the desired trail management objectives; have they incorporated best practices to be sustainable?

- *Outlines a implementation plan, including timeline and budget*

Prior to construction, an implementation plan may be required that outlines when the pathway or trail will be constructed, who will be constructing and how the project will be funded. Budgets should include contingency measures or funds for any cost overruns for the project.

- *Sources of funding are identified and secured*

Prior to initiating final authorization for actual construction, the proponent will be required to secure the appropriate level of funding to complete the project. Other fees, bonds or deposits may also be required prior to implementation.

- *Agreements for ongoing monitoring and maintenance have been established*

Regarding the arrangement for the operation of the pathway or trail, there may also be a requirement to show how it will be monitored and maintained. This would include any formal arrangements, including partnership and volunteer based operation.

#### Final Permits and Clearances

Projects that may adversely impact known archaeological sites or areas with medium or high historical resource potential may be required by the *Historical Resources Management Branch* of *Alberta Culture and Community Services* to conduct further archaeological testing. This would need to be conducted by a qualified archaeologist under an *Archaeological Research Permit* prior to construction, including any measures for mitigation which may include relocation or removal of the impacting segment. Similarly, any pathways or trails that may impact ecologically sensitive or significant areas will require authorization from the appropriate land use authority to proceed prior to any construction. There may also be conditions that the project may be subject to inspection during and after completion the construction period to ensure that all approved steps are being followed and any adverse effects are being mitigated.

## **APPENDIX A: New Corridors and Networks Process Checklists**

- **Stage 1: Initial Proposal Screening Checklist**
- **Stage 2: Conceptual Plan Consent Checklist**
- **Stage 3: Detailed Design Approval Checklist**

## Kananaskis Region: New Recreational Corridors & Networks Proposals

### Stage 1: Initial Proposal Screening Checklist

*Purpose: to outline a general idea and intent for the project proposal*

	Consideration Criteria	Yes ?	No ?	Details and Notes
1*	There is a map illustrating the general location of the proposal			
2*	Is consistent with wildlife sensitivity requirements for the planning area (e.g. trail density; wildlife corridors)			
3*	The intended recreational use complies with current land use rules and regulations			
4	The proposal compliments management objectives and direction for the area			
5	Has a defined and appropriate trail management objective			
6	The proposal identifies how it enhances existing recreational, aesthetic, educational and/or environmental opportunities within the planning unit and/or system			
7	The pathway or trail does not adversely impact existing recreational opportunities or experiences in the area			
8	The pathway or trail provides a unique or high quality opportunity			
9	The pathway or trail links to or uses existing infrastructure, staging areas			
10*	Identifies other potential conflicts, as well as any requirements for stakeholder, public and Aboriginal consultation			

\* must meet criteria or else it will not proceed to the conceptual planning stage.

## Kananaskis Region: New Recreational Corridors & Networks Proposals

### Stage 2: Conceptual Plan Consent Checklist

*Purpose: to develop a plan for the project, includes identifying and clarifying issues and opportunities*

	<b>Consideration Criteria</b>	<b>Yes ?</b>	<b>No ?</b>	<b>Details and Notes</b>
<b>1*</b>	There is a map flagging the anticipated trail route; may include GIS spatial files			
<b>2*</b>	The proposed pathway or trail routes avoids sensitive areas where possible			
<b>3*</b>	The plan identifies and assesses the natural, cultural, recreational, commercial and industrial values of the area, as well as any known or potential impacts that may occur as a result of the project			
<b>4</b>	The project seeks to minimize and mitigate the footprint or disturbance on the land base			
<b>5</b>	The plan demonstrates how it is ecologically, socially and operationally sustainable			
<b>6*</b>	The plan addresses existing and anticipated public safety and liability issues			
<b>7</b>	The plan outlines any required or anticipated management actions, (e.g. seasonal trail closures)			
<b>8</b>	The plan provides adequate features for desired experience			
<b>9</b>	The plan promotes cooperation between uses and users and identifies possible solutions			
<b>10*</b>	Outlines the process for any lease holder, stakeholder, public and/or Aboriginal consultation on the plan, if required			

**\* must meet criteria or else it may not proceed to detailed planning stage.**

## Kananaskis Region: New Recreational Corridors & Networks Proposals

### Stage 3: Detailed Design Approval Checklist

*Purpose: to establish specific details and schematics and to secure final agreements and approvals*

	<b>Consideration Criteria</b>	<b>Yes ?</b>	<b>No ?</b>	<b>Details and Notes</b>
<b>1*</b>	There is a map detailing the specific trail routing; including GIS spatial files			
<b>2*</b>	Site-specific details are provided and considerations related to negative ecological and social impacts during construction and operation are addressed			
<b>3*</b>	All other significant GOA and stakeholder concerns have been addressed and any other potential or irresolvable issues acknowledged			
<b>4*</b>	All required permits and clearances have been acquired; EIA, HRIA, etc			
<b>5*</b>	Identifies other actions to be completed (e.g. water crossings; rehab work; decommissioning)			
<b>6</b>	The details of the pathway or trail are consistent with applicable standards and best practices.			
<b>7</b>	Outlines an implementation plan, including timeline and budget			
<b>8</b>	Sources of funding are identified and secured			
<b>9*</b>	Agreements for ongoing monitoring and maintenance have been established			
<b>10**</b>	Presents results and decisions made from all lease holder, stakeholder, public and Aboriginal consultation			

\* must meet criteria before receiving authority to construct \*\* may be required before detailed design is initiated.