

**To:** Colby Knowler

**From:** Keith Lay (An associate of Active Trails Whitehorse Association)

**Re:** Contagious Mountain Bike Club Trail Development Application

**Date:** 9/14/2023

According to the information received the trail application proposal involves the construction of a “single track link from RIP (Rest in Peace) back to Magnusson parking lot that would provide a climbing route off [sic] away from motorized traffic on Grey Mountain road, creating a viable continuous climb trail to Magnusson parking lot as it continues from RIPURT.”

**Comment:** The suggestion is that this trail would provide a “climbing route” for mountain bikers that would allow them to avoid using the Grey Mountain Road to get them from RIP to the Magnusson parking lot, and that this would improve safety for all riders.

This may give people the impression that it is a difficult “climb” from RIP to the Magnusson parking lot. It is not. In fact, one hardly notices that the road goes uphill at all between the two points. The gain in elevation is around fourteen metres.

As to whether or not it would improve safety, the suggestion is debatable. One might well argue that it is safer to use a road that is maintained by the City of Whitehorse than it is to use a trail maintained by a user group.

Having used the road for running over the course of many years I have never experienced any concern with vehicle traffic. And, as a runner, I have far more chance of injury running on Chadburn Lake trails than on the Grey Mountain Road.

The information package provided says that the new trail “will also create a valuable grooming loop in winter as there is currently no connection back to Magnusson area for the Snow Dog trail groomer.”

**Comment:** Unfortunately, there is no information given as to what specific trails are packed for fat biking in the winter. This would allow one to determine if there *is* an alternate way to get back to the Magnusson area that would allow the packing of other fat biking trails along the way.

Would it not make for a better fat biking trail if it was packed twice? Apparently, fat bikers prefer trails that are more compacted than Nordic trails, as this allows them to ride in a greater range of conditions.

If so, then a return packing trip to the Magnusson area via RIP and other fat biking trails would make for a better trail (s).

It would be good to know how the club handles this perceived problem now. Does it shuttle the grooming equipment between the two areas?

The application should indicate exactly what type of equipment is being used by the club to groom fat biking trails. If the grooming equipment can be used on the Grey Mountain Road, which seems likely as it would have to cross the road to access the proposed trail, then why can it not be driven up the road to the Magnusson parking lot? (It takes nine minutes to walk the distance involved.)

And, as will be mentioned later, there *already is* an existing trail connection to the Magnusson parking area from RIP that parallels the Grey Mountain Road. As such, there needs to be an explanation given as to why this route is not being considered.

In any case, it seems overkill to impact 800 metres of forest to create a 1.5-metre-wide trail for the sake of eliminating a little inconvenience.

**“The trail will be built with mountain biking in mind and encourage people to ride up grey [sic] mountain rather than drive.”**

**Comment:** The second part of the above statement needs explanation. Why would the building of the proposed trail “encourage people to ride up Grey Mountain rather than drive?”

The Magnusson parking area is a very convenient area from which to begin one’s preferred recreational pursuit, as you can access so many trails from that location. So, people will continue to drive to that very popular site.

As for the first part of the above statement, it is nice to see an admission that this proposed trail is primarily a mountain bike trail and if built will be packed and used in winter for fat biking. For all intents and purposes, the proposed trail will be a single-use mountain bike trail. Of course, the claim is made that the trail will be open for skiing and snowshoeing in winter.

However, “cross country ski “trails typically have a classic track that is set into the snow by a grooming implement . . . Classic skiers rely on the groomed classic track to guide their skis . . .” (See <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2213078019300246>.)

Is it the intent of the CMBC to also put down a classic track for cross-country skiers? I doubt it. The trail will be groomed for fat bikes in winter, not for classic cross-country skiers. Groomed fat bike trails are not groomed classic ski trails, and they do not make for enjoyable classic skiing.

It is somewhat strange that the trail will be open to snowshoe use in winter as “snowshoes can cause indents on these groomed areas [areas groomed for XC skiing and fat biking], thus

resulting in safety issues and [potentially] making the route unusable for skiers and fat bikers.”  
(See [https://www.snowshoemag.com/trail-etiquette-for-snowshoeing-and-winter-hiking/.](https://www.snowshoemag.com/trail-etiquette-for-snowshoeing-and-winter-hiking/))

Of course, snowshoe users are often asked to use unpacked trails prior to them being groomed for fat biking. Perhaps this is why the trail will be open to snowshoe users, although they will have to find a way to avoid the packed section of the proposed trail after it is machined groomed.

According to the Chadburn Lake Park Management Plan, “the cumulative impact of new trails and/or other infrastructure should not substantially alter the wilderness experience.”  
(p. 19 of Management Plan)

**Comment:** People will have different views as to what constitutes a substantial alteration of the wilderness experience.

However, this proposed trail is 800 metres long. To get an idea as to how long this is, walk twice around the 400-metre running track in Whitehorse. Some 1200 square metres of land will be impacted one way or another if this trail is built. Of course, we never consider the plant, animal, and bird life that will be affected by the construction and long-term use of the trail.

It should also be realized that the proposed trail is a *recreational* trail. The City of Whitehorse tells us that there are “an estimated 230 km of trails of city-wide significance and over 850 km of local and neighbourhood trails used by Whitehorse residents.”

We should be very careful about adding more to the list. Instead, we should be consolidating what we have rather than adding more to the mix. If we keep building new trails, we will continue to degrade the wilderness aspect of our city.

### **Main Concern:**

The main concern with this application lies in the fact that the building of a new trail is simply not necessary as there already is a trail connection from where RIP contacts the Grey Mountain Road to the Magnusson parking area.

Photos that may help to illustrate this can be found at the following site:  
<https://www.activetwa.org/photos.html>. There are 14 photos in all. The red line in the first two photos indicate the CMBC proposed trail.

Even on the images provided in the information package concerning the trail proposal, you can just make out the existing trail on the west side of the Grey Mountain Road. (See photos 1 and 2.) This “Old Road” can be seen on Gaia Maps. Although the “Old Road” appears to turn south before it comes to the Power Line, there is a branch that carries on beside the road to the Power Line.

This trail is .52 kms long or 520 metres in length, takes about six minutes to walk, and ascends about ten metres.

According to the *East Yukon River Trail Plan*, the latter trail is an “Old Road” and is considered to be a Non-Motorized Multi-Use Trail. (See <https://www.whitehorse.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/636356372502630000.jpeg>.)

It seems that the “Old Road” is also indicated on the Whitehorse East Trails App as a Green Line. And, the Green Line indicates a branch that cuts towards the Power Line and parallels the Grey Mountain Road.

It seems obvious by the image provided in the trail development package that the club does not intend to use this aforementioned existing trail that parallels the Grey Mountain Road from RIP to the Power Line.

Unfortunately, it is hard to tell by the image provided as to whether or not the club plans to use the existing trail that goes from the Power Line to the Magnusson parking area.

This trail is .25 kms long or 250 metres in length, takes about three minutes to walk, and ascends about four metres. This is the only part of the route that needs some work, as the trail (although obvious) needs some clearing.

If the club does not feel this section of the existing trail is suitable for use, then it could simply cross to the other side of the road at the Power Line where an existing trail combined with open spaces leads right to the Magnusson parking area. (See <https://www.activetwa.org/photos.html> photo 7.)

The application does not mention the existence of the “Old Road” trail and the branch that leads right to the Magnusson parking area. Nor does it mention the possibility of crossing the Grey Mountain Road at the Power Line in order to reach the Magnusson parking area, which would avoid doing any work on the last 250 metres of the trail located on the west side of the road. (Under any scenario the Grey Mountain Road would have to be crossed at two locations.)

The application raises more questions than answers. If there are alternatives that would avoid the construction of a new trail through Chadburn Lake Park, then those alternatives should be considered and explanations provided if the alternatives are deemed unacceptable. Until that time the application should not proceed.

As an associate of ATWA I appreciate the opportunity to present my personal comments on this proposed trail development project.

Keith Lay (An associate of Active Trails Whitehorse Association)