

**REPORT TO THE  
PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2011**

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**SUBJECT: REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY (RSS)**

**ISSUE:**

The work plan and consultation strategy for the RSS require revision to reflect the input from the scoped consultation process and direction is required to pursue alternative funding sources.

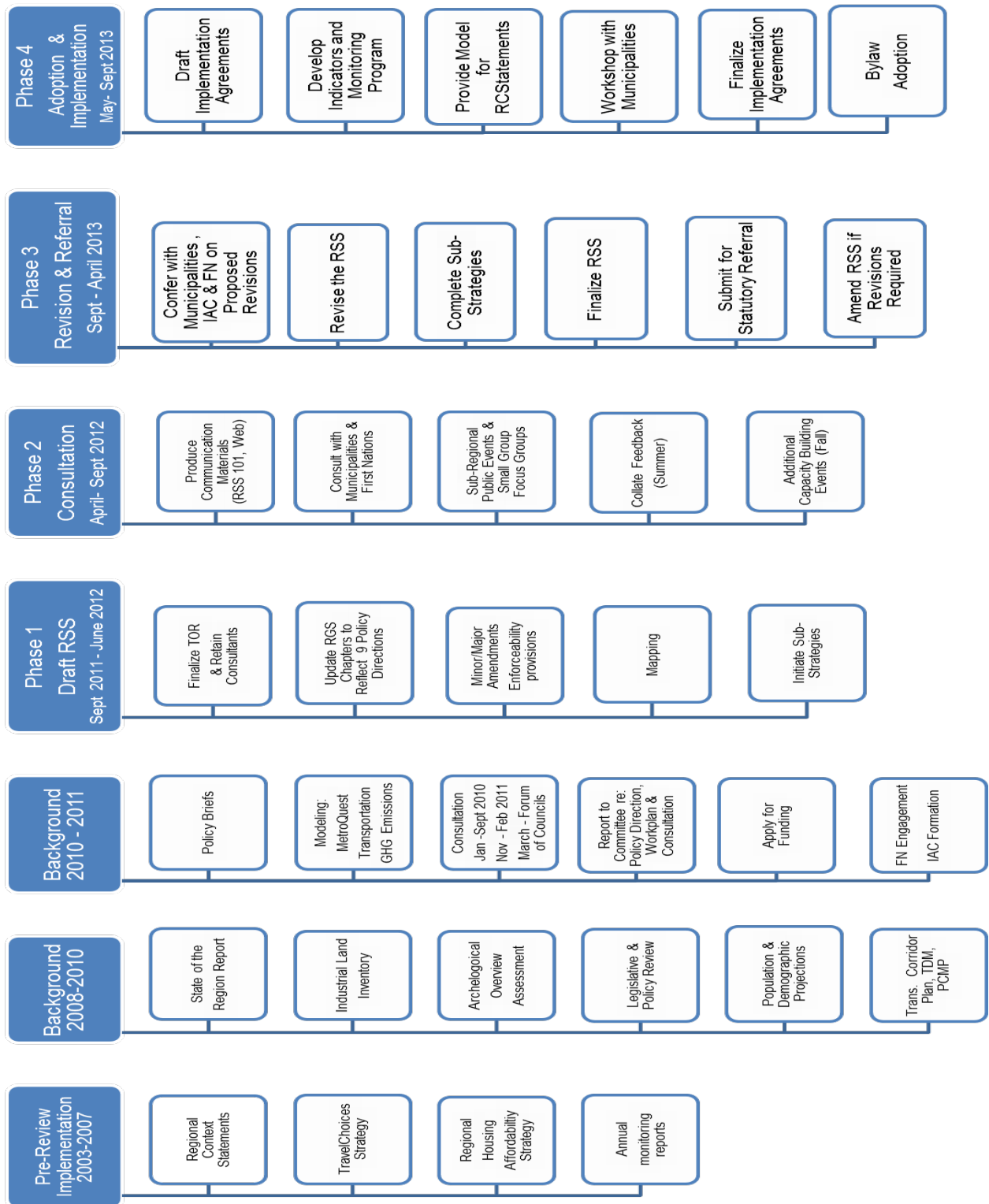
**BACKGROUND:**

At the October, 2010 Committee of the Whole Workshop, Regional Planning staff commenced a scoped consultation on the policy briefs prepared for the new RSS. The scoped consultation culminated in a Council of Councils Forum on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, following which written submissions were accepted into late April. Appendix 1 summarizes the extent of the consultations as well as providing summaries of the input received from municipal Councils and members of the Development Planning Advisory Committee (DPAC), stakeholder groups, the public and the Council Forum. Original submissions are available on-line, as indicated in [Appendix 1](#).

Regional Planning staff, in collaboration with the CRD inter-departmental working group (Sustainability Resource Team (SRT)), reviewed the input and developed policy directions for each of the 9 policy areas. The SRT consists of staff from Planning & Protective Services, Environmental Sustainability, Parks & Community Services and Integrated Water Services. [Appendix 2](#) contains 9 policy direction summaries which indicate the context for the policy, an indication of scope change, the policy goals and proposed initiatives that will be pursued through the RSS and associated sub-strategies. These policy directions will form the basis for the first draft of the RSS.

In [Appendix 3](#), the work plan for the RSS is laid out in detail. Figure 1 summarizes this work plan, and indicates the background work completed to date. The work plan anticipates a period of drafting this fall and winter, followed by an extensive community consultation program in 2012. At the conclusion of consultations, a period of revision is contemplated, followed by the mandatory municipal referral process prior to the Board's consideration of the bylaw. The RSS development process also includes four sub-strategies to be developed concurrently with the RSS, including: transportation (Phase II Corridor Plan), housing, food security and climate adaptation. Leading up to bylaw adoption, a final phase includes the development of implementation tools and monitoring measures to facilitate the application of the RSS in regional and municipal planning processes and bylaws. In total, the work plan consists of a 4-phase project spanning 24 months (2 budget cycles). The work plan features an inclusive process, working with the SRT, municipalities, First Nations, government agencies, stakeholder groups and the public to arrive at a comprehensive sustainability strategy. Once approved by the CRD, the work plan is to be sent to the Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development, to mark the initiation of the project, as required under the Local Government Act.

Figure 1



Closely related to the work plan is the consultation strategy for the RSS development process, which has been updated from the prior 2008 version to include consultations anticipated in Phase II of the work plan. The updated consultation strategy forms [Appendix 4](#) of this report and features both localized and regional communication strategies to generate interest and participation in the RSS. The consultation strategy is inclusive of the groups required under the Local Government Act, being the citizens, municipalities, First Nations, school district boards, and senior government agencies. Similarly, once approved by the CRD, the consultation strategy must be submitted to the Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development, as required under the Local Government Act.

[Appendix 5](#) of the report contains the final screening document prepared for consideration by the Regionally Significant Priorities (RSP) Fund Working Group (WG) in their deliberations for allocating the \$18.5 M RSP gas tax funding assigned to the CRD. As Committee will recall, a Board resolution adopted in December 2010 endorsed dedicating the RSP funds for the CRD to transportation projects and integrated sustainability planning. The screening document reflects the work plan and consultation strategy (Appendices 3 & 4) and further outlines the budgetary requirements to undertake the RSS. The total estimated budget for the 4-phase work plan is estimated at \$1.2 M, of which \$780,000 is for the development of the RSS, up to 5 sub-strategies, implementation tools and the monitoring indicators. The remaining \$420,000 is for consultations and communications associated with the RSS process. The RSP WG has agreed to recommend to the CRD Board that \$550,000 of the \$18.5 M be applied to the RSS as an integrated sustainability planning project that benefits all municipalities and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. That the Planning, Transportation & Protective Services Committee recommend to the CRD Board:
  - a) That the policy directions in Appendix 2 be endorsed and used as the policy basis to draft the Regional Sustainability Strategy;
  - b) That the work plan of the Regional Sustainability Strategy contained in Appendix 3 be adopted and that this work plan be submitted to the Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development;
  - c) That the consultation strategy for the Regional Sustainability Strategy in Appendix 4 be adopted and that this work plan be submitted to the Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development;
  - d) That Regional Planning staff be authorized to proceed with a request for funding under the Regionally Significant Projects (RSP) gas tax fund in the amount of \$550,000 for the Regional Sustainability Strategy as an integrated sustainability planning project, subject to the CRD Board approval of the recommendations of the RSP Working Group regarding allocation of the CRD RSP Fund; and
  - e) That Regional Planning staff be authorized to proceed with other grant funding applications to supplement the budget for the RSS project.
2. That the Planning, Transportation & Protective Services Committee recommend to the CRD Board that Alternative 1 be endorsed with the following change to 1b):
  - a) That the work plan of the Regional Sustainability Strategy contained in Appendix 3 be amended to remove the sub-strategies and defer their preparation to a later date.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

The RSS process is intended to work in concert with the transportation planning initiatives currently underway. The transportation sub-strategy contemplated in the RSS project is the Phase II Corridor Plan, which will be initiated during Phase I of the RSS to inform the

sustainability strategy and, in turn, be implemented through the RSS as well as through the new management framework for a regional transportation service currently under development.

Alternative 1 provides for the transportation sub-strategy to proceed simultaneously with the RSS, which is considered optimal from a planning and logistics perspective. Delaying the sub-strategies as contemplated in Alternative 2 would disadvantage both the RSS transportation policies as well as implementation of a new regional transportation service.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

Regional Planning received many relevant and thoughtful comments on the policy options that have assisted staff in developing the policy directions summarized in Appendix 2. These policy directions are summarized further, by theme, below.

### **Built Environment:**

The policy areas under this theme include sustainable development, transportation and affordable housing. While the policy directions for these policy areas respect the current Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), they more assertively pursue focused growth, an enforceable Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA), response to climate change, multi-modal transportation focused on active modes and transit and a more aggressive approach to housing affordability. The policy direction also recognizes the importance of preserving rural integrity and resource areas, with the understanding that rural areas will not be subject to the same requirements for focused growth and alternative transportation modes, relative to their urban counterparts. As previously indicated, the transportation sub-strategy contemplated as part of the RSS project is the Phase II Corridor Plan; a second sub-strategy for this theme is housing which is an issue of sustained community concern. The policy shift for this theme leans toward the significant policy options presented in the policy briefs.

### **Natural Systems:**

Policy areas included in this theme are: climate action, resource management and ecological health. Climate action is the new policy area and the direction selected is one that builds on existing provincial and regional plans and targets, focusing on programming and partnerships. Key among the actions is the development of a climate adaptation strategy, one of the named sub-strategies, and pivotal to informing other policies in the RSS, as climate action will be a common thread throughout the RSS. Policies for resource management build on the foundational work of the solid and liquid waste management plans and water conservation plans already in existence in the CRD. Policy directions feature initiatives that will see the integration of these plans as well as addressing new opportunities like district energy systems and chronic problems like inflow and infiltration in sewage infrastructure. Ecological health policies will rely on the recently completed Regional Parks Strategic Plan for guidance on protected areas as well as expand regional influence in the areas of ecosystem and species protection, in collaboration with other levels of government, First Nations and stakeholders.

### **Social Resilience:**

The policy areas constituting social resilience include: economic sustainability, food security and social wellbeing. Of these, food security and social wellbeing are new policy areas not currently addressed in the RGS, except for policies addressing agricultural land preservation. There was significant interest in the food security policy options, and it garnered the highest public response of any of the policy options. The policy direction for food security continues to reflect

the strong position of the RGS on agricultural land preservation, and also addresses new areas including measures to enhance the viability of the farm operator, increasing access to land by bona fide farmers, re-building agricultural infrastructure, increasing access to local food and addressing the sustainability of food systems. One of the sub-strategies proposed in the project is a regional food strategy. The economic sustainability policies focus on regional support for business and industry, both urban and rural, and speak to preserving and supporting existing employment areas. Social wellbeing policies will focus on improving social conditions of vulnerable populations, involving First Nations in planning matters of mutual interest and introduces a new focus on disaster resilience through policies to coordinate and plan for emergency situations, such as an earthquake.

As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, the RSS work plan contemplates doing the sub-strategies concurrently with the RSS. This arrangement is optimal in that it facilitates action and implementation much faster relative to doing these processes in tandem. Further, it permits more detailed consultation with stakeholder groups, who are more oriented toward action than policy. Therefore, Alternative 1 is favoured over Alternative 2.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As previously indicated, the planning period for this project is anticipated to span two years (2 budget cycles). The overall budget is estimated at \$1.2 M, including all 4 phases of the work plan and an extensive, region-wide consultation strategy. The budget also includes up to 5 sub-strategies: regional food strategy, housing, transportation (Phase II Corridor Plan), climate adaptation and budget for one additional, to be determined through the process if necessary. This budget and timeline is reflected in Alternative 1.

The RSP WG has agreed that, of the \$18.5 M RSP fund for the Region, \$550,000.00 should be allocated to the RSS as an integrated sustainability planning project that benefits all municipalities of the region and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. Staff seek the Committee's endorsement to apply to the RSP Fund, upon approval by the CRD Board of the RSP WG recommendations. These funds would be applied to the policy development phases of the project.

As the RSP funds will not cover the full costs of the project, other sources of funding will be necessary and staff will look to the existing RGS budget as well as an additional supplement over the next two years to offset the costs associated with the public consultation and implementation phases of the project. Staff also seek Committee's authorization to pursue other grant funding sources that may be available for the implementation phase of the work, such as additional gas tax funds or the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund. The implementation phase is not anticipated until 2013, so there is ample time to make the application prior to any budget commitment for the 2013 fiscal year.

It should be noted that Alternative 2 would defer \$300,000.00 for the sub-strategies to a later date and would also have the effect of dragging the process out over a longer period and delaying implementation. Further, the Board would be asked to adopt an RSS without the benefit of considering some of the implementation actions. Upon completion of the sub-strategies in the future, it is likely that amendments to the RSS would also be required, with consequent amendments to the Regional Context Statements.

## **CONCLUSION**

The review of the RGS has evolved to the next stage, which is the drafting of the new RSS and its associated sub-strategies and consultations, as outlined in Figure 1. The anticipated timeline for completion, including by-law adoption, monitoring system and implementation measures, is 24 months. The estimated budget is \$1.2 M; agreement has been reached through the RSP WG that \$550,000.00 of the \$18.5 M RSP fund should be allocated to the RSS. Other sources of funding, including the existing RGS budget, supplementary taxation and other grant opportunities will be pursued to cover costs. Alternative 1 is recommended in order to develop both policy and implementation measures, complete with sub-strategies concurrently in order to move toward implementation and action at the earliest possible time.

The region is at a crossroads whereby transitioning the existing RGS to the next level is imperative to drive sustainability initiatives and yield tangible results. The new RSS, among other measures like current regional transportation initiatives and corporate strategic planning, provides the over-arching regional direction and call to action needed on several different fronts. Implementation will focus on grounded results achieved through partnerships, as well as new authorities, as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee recommend to the CRD Board:

- a) That the policy directions in Appendix 2 be endorsed and used as the policy basis to draft the Regional Sustainability Strategy;
- b) That the work plan of the Regional Sustainability Strategy contained in Appendix 3 be adopted and that this work plan be submitted to the Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development;
- c) That the consultation strategy for the Regional Sustainability Strategy in Appendix 4 be adopted and that this work plan be submitted to the Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development;
- d) That Regional Planning staff be authorized to proceed with a request for funding under the Regionally Significant Projects (RSP) gas tax fund in the amount of \$550,000 for the Regional Sustainability Strategy as an integrated sustainability planning project, subject to the CRD Board approval of the recommendations of the RSP Working Group regarding allocation of the CRD RSP Fund; and
- e) That Regional Planning staff be authorized to proceed with other grant funding applications to supplement the budget for the RSS project.

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