

News Release



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Connectivity strategy provides roadmap to improved internet and cellular service for underserved Cowichan communities

DUNCAN, BC – A newly completed Cowichan Internet & Cellular Connectivity Strategy has identified gaps in connectivity infrastructure and services in the region, and provides recommended actions for improved connection into the future.

The 2020-2022 Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board Strategic Plan identified the development of a connectivity strategy as a key action towards creating healthy, livable, and efficiently-served communities for residents of all backgrounds and income levels. After conducting extensive background research and securing funding for the project in 2021, Economic Development Cowichan (EDC) launched the Cowichan Regional Internet & Cellular Connectivity Strategy project in early 2022. Working in collaboration with consultants from IBI Group, EDC staff undertook a process of research, analysis, education and engagement that has resulted in the development of a Regional Connectivity Strategy and four Community Connectivity Plans.

“Connectivity is an essential service that allows us not only to communicate, but to work, learn and access services online,” said Barry O’Riordan, Manager of Economic Development Cowichan. “This strategy helps us better understand the state of internet and cell phone connectivity in the region so we can work to improve access for all residents and businesses.”

Community members, local businesses, First Nations, internet service providers, and many others participated in the development of the strategy, which identified the following as a collective vision for the future of connectivity for the region:

“The Cowichan Valley Regional District is a connected community, with an appropriate and efficient mix of technologies deployed throughout the region that provides affordable access to connectivity services for all homes and businesses. Connectivity enhances the livability of our communities by enabling business, employment, health care, education, security, and social and family connections for residents of all backgrounds and income levels.”

The Regional Connectivity Strategy recommends that the CVRD continue in its role of observing, advocating and influencing the rollout of connectivity infrastructure and services in the region, with the potential to evolve into a more active role in the future. The report provides 28 specific recommended actions focusing on advocacy and facilitation, affordability and access, infrastructure, local government policy, and cellular coverage. The Community Connectivity Plans outline specific technologies, network plans and funding models to bring improved service to the four priority underserved communities: Thetis and Penelakut Islands, Cowichan Station, Ditidaht First Nation, and the Cowichan Lake region. The plans provide a roadmap for these communities to tackle their connectivity challenges.

The Cowichan Regional Internet & Cellular Connectivity Strategy may be viewed at planyourcowichan.ca/connect.

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