



TRANS CANADA TRAIL
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TRANS CANADA TRAIL'S
STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024
STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

August 2021



OUR MISSION

As the longest trail network in the world, the Trans Canada Trail connects Canadians and visitors to nature and to one another, from coast to coast to coast, through accessible and inclusive outdoor activities. Through collaboration and partnerships, we build, maintain and steward Canada's national trail, a unique system of connected urban and rural trails.

OUR VISION

Building on the achievement of connection, the Trans Canada Trail will continue to inspire everyone to embrace the outdoors, to discover the diversity of our land and people, to enhance their health and well-being, and to share their stories along this globally significant and iconic trail network.





INTRODUCTION

Together with our partners, donors and volunteers we have created an epic trail of trails - the Trans Canada Trail – that connects Canadians to nature and to one another. The Trans Canada Trail is a national legacy, a Canadian asset, and a sustainable gift that fosters unity, collaboration and connectedness.

This strategic plan sets the direction for the future, outlining our six key Strategies for Success. The Strategies for Success were informed by research, environment scans and engagement with Board members, staff, partners, donors and volunteers, as well as an examination of the practices and programs of leading trail organizations around the world. These consultations led to the articulation of this new strategic direction, which will guide our activities in the coming years, to ensure the Trans Canada Trail continues to connect and highlight Canada's diverse landscapes, seasons, people and experiences.

SIX STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- T**rail excellence for all
- R**esource and capacity building
- A** amazing experiences
- I** ncreased visitor economy, domestic and international tourism
- L** eading the development of a digital trail
- S** upported by a broad coalition of stakeholders

T RAIL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL



One of our main goals is to **maintain, improve and enhance the Trail**, from coast to coast to coast. Regular trail maintenance is vital to maintaining national connection, as much as possible over the four seasons. Trail infrastructure, as any other, requires ongoing maintenance, repairs and replacement. Urgent repairs, following damage caused by ever-changing climatic forces, must be continually undertaken and we work to ensure that these are done in a timely manner. We provide both technical and financial support to our local trail groups to ensure that needed ongoing work is undertaken on our national trail.



We also strive to **improve safety and comfort on every section of the Trail, and, where possible, to increase the number of greenways** to enhance the user experience. We are committed to providing safe, secure routes for the enjoyment of everyone who wants to get out into nature and experience our beautiful country: hikers, walkers, cyclists, horseback riders, canoeists and kayakers in the summer, cross-country skiers, snowshoers and snowmobilers in the winter.



Improving trail accessibility for all is also an important objective. We are working to inspire and encourage trail builders and users to ensure that the Trail and its surrounding environment are inclusive, so that everyone can safely access outdoor experiences on the Trail. We are working to remove barriers to accessibility when identified, and providing expertise and funding to local trail and operating organizations for the design, development and visitation management of local Trail sections. We are also adding amenities such as benches, rest areas, beacons for guidance, sensory elements, adequate signage and information.



We need to invest in **replacing, repairing and adding signage along the Trail**, to support orientation and safety; to share Canadian culture, history and heritage; to impart Indigenous knowledge and culture; and to provide recognition to the many supporters across the country. It is important that users are provided with information about the state of the Trail, including descriptions of what to expect, levels of difficulty, images and trail data, and closures or seasonal hours.

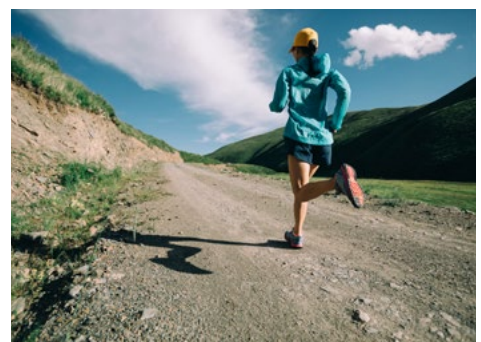
RESOURCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING

A myriad of resources is required to support and protect this pan-Canadian asset. We rely on provincial and territorial Trail partners, hundreds of local trail groups and countless volunteers to build, maintain and improve the Trail. As a national sector leader, TCT is well positioned to support the sector, and **advocate for trails in Canada**.

Our surveys have shown that our volunteer forces are an aging group and that attention must be given to support the next generation of trail builders and managers. Our **Trail Builders of Tomorrow program** aims to ensure training and volunteer recruitment, and to show the next generation that there are viable careers in the trail sector. We need to support the training of youth in the important skill of trail building, to ensure that future generations have the knowledge and skills required to protect our national trail, for the enjoyment of all. We are forming incredible partnerships to support this objective, including new trail building camps for Indigenous youth, and programs to help youth with meaningful summer employment programs working on the Trail.

We are also creating a **volunteer development, engagement and recognition program** to help build capacity at the local level. We need to make certain that volunteers are engaged and recognized for the crucial work that they do.

Now is the time for Trans Canada Trail to assume a leadership role in the trail sector, providing access to our expertise and knowledge, as well as that of other successful trail organizations. It's about sharing best practices in the many aspects of trail development, such as infrastructure improvement, marketing and resource development strategies, increasing trail sector capacity and knowledge, and supporting innovation.



A^{MAZING} EXPERIENCES



Building on the milestone of connection, we now have an incredible asset to encourage people to get outdoors and experience the myriad benefits of the Trail.



In October of 2020, we launched an inaugural signature event called the **Great Canadian Hike, which encouraged Canadians to get out and hike** for their physical and mental health. Building on its initial success, the Great Canadian Hike will now be an annual signature event. One of our goals is to create, manage and produce TCT signature events that motivate and inspire Canadians. To help us create new amazing experiences along the Trail, we rely on a variety of strategic alliances and partnerships.



Trail users have told us that they are interested in participating in activities and local events taking place along the Trail. Working in collaboration with our partners across the country, we want to promote local events and activities, and to **encourage more people to experience the Trail**. From horseback riding to canoeing, hiking and cycling, there is something for everyone.



Trans Canada Trail will be celebrating a very special year in 2022 - **our 30th anniversary**. This promises to be an exciting year, as we create special events and initiatives to recognize this important milestone in our organization's history. It's an opportunity to celebrate all the Trail has to offer, our rich history in Canada and the people that helped make this happen.

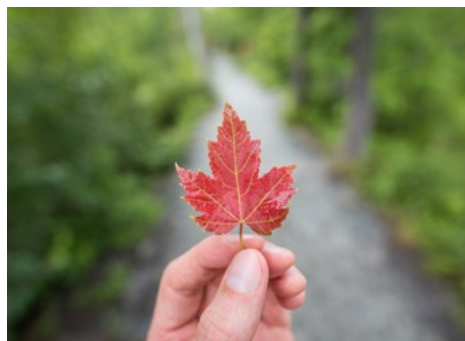
INCREASE VISITOR ECONOMY, DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

The Trail is a powerful asset that provides access to the beauty of Canada and active transportation routes, supports initiatives that enhance the well-being of individuals and their communities, and drives economic development. The inherent values of the Trail can be leveraged to the benefit of all – Canadians and visitors, businesses and governments.

The Trail represents an opportunity to **stimulate the economy through eco-tourism, while protecting the ecology and biodiversity** for which Canada is renowned. The Trail connects urban centres, where the majority of Canadians live, to nearby natural areas, providing an important connection to the environment, to areas of cultural history, and to the diversity of our communities.

With the opportunities to “rebuild” our economy, following the coronavirus pandemic, the Trail can play a significant role in delivering economic stimulus to local economies, while protecting and enhancing our natural landscapes and biodiversity. As a stage for branded events and amazing experiences, the Trail can attract Canadians for **staycations** and, hopefully soon, **international tourists** to discover our country.

We will, therefore, be working to enhance and promote various sections of the Trail as tourism products, to **put the Trail on the itineraries of international and domestic visitors, and to create exceptional trail experiences**. Inherent in this work is the establishment of partnerships with local, regional and national organizations and corporations, including those run by and for Indigenous groups and communities.



LEADING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DIGITAL TRAIL



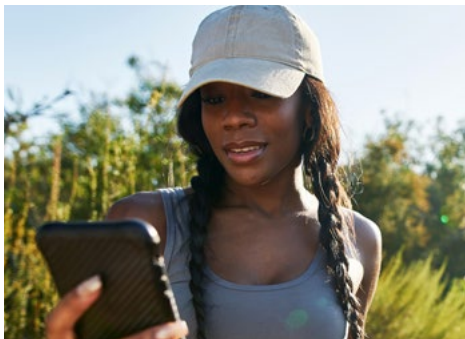
As we move into the future, we want to take advantage of technology to educate and **provide information about historical and natural features along the Trail**, for users to participate in learning about the Trail online. Like the physical trail, a digital trail has the potential to extend the Trail's reach, and to connect visitors from around the world to this great Canadian asset.



An up-to-date and well-maintained website is crucial in reflecting TCT's vision, mission and brand. It is the portal for providing accurate information on Trail conditions, for marketing the Trail, for promoting events and Trail experiences, and for helping Trail users **navigate to their favourite section by using our interactive map**.



We will also be exploring the use of technology to potentially bring the Trail indoors (online). The potential benefits of this initiative range from providing **interactive educational tools for teachers and students**, in order to extend the Trail's reach to a global audience.



We are also interested in exploring how users can bring technology onto the Trail with them, through their mobile devices, to **enhance the user experience and to make the Trail more accessible**. We want to encourage people, who might otherwise be hesitant about exploring trails, to feel more comfortable in a natural environment, and we want to provide opportunities to participate in the enjoyment of the Trail through digitally enabled adaptive technologies.

SUPPORTED BY A BROAD COALITION OF STAKEHOLDERS

None of what we are hoping to achieve would be possible without the support of a broad group of people coming together – trail partners, volunteers, donors, corporate partners, media and governments at all levels. This includes engaging BIPOC communities (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) to **ensure the Trail is a safe, healthy and inclusive place for all.**

As a national charity, we rely on raising much-needed funding from corporate partners, individual donors and all levels of government. We must continue to generate revenue and grow our volunteer base to ensure the sustainability of the Trail for generations to come. This includes engaging with new corporate sponsors and individual donors, as well as attracting the next generation of donors and volunteers. Also vital to our success is the continuation of our **strong partnerships with federal, provincial and territorial, and municipal levels of government.**

The Trans Canada Trail brand lives in the hearts and minds of our stakeholders, and engaging them in building our brand is a key strategy for success. In extensive consultations with donors, trail users, partners and trail groups, we heard that the former name of our national trail - The Great Trail - was not resonating. In June 2021, we changed the name of our physical asset from The Great Trail, back to the much-loved and iconic name – the Trans Canada Trail. We will **continue to listen to and engage with all our stakeholders**, and will build our brand through storytelling, social media, events and promotions.

In creating our new strategic plan, we involved all our stakeholder groups to help us chart a new course. This strategic plan is the result of numerous conversations, surveys, workshops and interviews. Continuing to **engage all our stakeholders** in our work is at the core of what TCT is undertaking.





To all the trailblazers along the way.

Because of you, the Trans Canada Trail continues to inspire, thrill and contribute to the health, happiness and adventurous spirit of all Canadians. A million thanks to every amazing volunteer, trail user, donor, organization, government partner and outdoor enthusiast who has helped in forging our path to becoming the world's longest network of recreational multi-use trails.



Trans Canada Trail

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