CENTRAL ALBERTA TOURISM ALLIANCE

OUR PATH FORWARD

A Strategy to Grow Central Alberta's
Trails-Based Visitor Economy

What we Heard Compendium

March 2020

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1 INTRODUCTION

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In alignment with *Realizing Our Potential: Central Alberta Destination Management Plan*, the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance is leading the development of a Trail Tourism Master Plan for the region. The intent of the Trails Tourism Master Plan is to understand the current supply of trails tourism experiences in the region and the region's trails tourism sector, identify target markets and their interests and expectations. The plan will identify the 5-8 signature trail experiences that the region will pursue in order to optimize the region's trails tourism potential.

The planning process was based on meaningful stakeholder engagement. Efforts were taken to meaningfully engage the tourism industry, trail operators, trail organizations, land managers and other stakeholders in the development of the Plan. The engagement program consisted of two stages. The purpose of each stage was as follows:

Stage 1:

To introduce the project and understand:

- Benefits of trails tourism and regional collaboration
- Which trails tourism experiences is the region most interested in offering.
- Which trails in the region have the greatest tourism potential.
- Strengths and weaknesses of the current supply of trails tourism experiences
- Actions needed to enhance trails tourism in the region
- Issues, challenges and considerations for advancing trails tourism.
- Target markets, market expectations and origins
- Current trails tourism brands, marketing, promotions and visitor information services
- Organizations involved in the delivery, management and marketing of trail tourism experiences

Stage 2:

To present and receive input on:

- The findings from stage 1 engagement, and the
- The draft management plan and
- Receive input on the draft management plan.

The engagement process was purposefully designed to engage the following:

- Central Alberta Tourism Alliance members
- Trails Organizations
- Tourism Operators
- Alberta Environment & Parks (Parks & Public Lands)
- Alberta Culture & Tourism
- Travel Alberta
- Municipalities
- Resource Industry

To enable convenient and meaningful involvement in the process, a variety of engagement tactics were applied throughout each stage of engagement, including:

Stage One:

- Government Stakeholder Online Survey(s)
- Follow-up Interviews (as needed based on online survey input)
- 1 full-day Trail Organization & Tour Operator Stakeholder Workshop
- Online Interactive Web Mapping – Vertisee

Stage Two:

- Big Ideas Workshop
- Two Stakeholder Workshops
- Online Stakeholder Survey

This report is a compendium and analysis of the significant volume of input received through each stage of the engagement process. The input received during each stage of engagement is presented and organized by each engagement tactic that was applied.

Photo Credit: AMPPE

2 STAGE 1 ENGAGEMENT – WHAT WE HEARD

2.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Input received through each of the engagement tactics were analysed and the common themes and findings were identified. The key findings are as follows:

1. Trails Tourism Can Bring Positive Benefits

Most participants recognized that trails tourism can yield positive economic, social, health and environmental benefits for the region. These benefits can be particularly important in smaller communities in the region if those communities are connected to the trails and if tourism operators build services and experiences based on the trails.

2. Strong Support for Trails Tourism

Participants recognized that the region holds strong trails tourism potential and that the region's trails tourism potential has yet to be capitalized. The number and diversity of trails, location of the region and its strong tourism market presence provide a strong foundation for successful trails tourism. There is strong support amongst participants for the region to pursue trails tourism.

3. Not All Trails can be Signature Trails

Though all trails in the region have the potential to support or supplement tourism, participants were clear that signature trails are different. They require a greater level of investment in design, operations, amenities and provide unique experiences that differentiate them from other trails. Key characteristics of a signature trail experience are as follows:

» Land manager approval and support for the trail and designated uses
» The trail is sufficient length to provide multi-night experience with accommodation options
» Trail is easily accessed with clear trailheads
» Strong visual / scenic appeal along the trail
» Trail provides a unique experience (e.g stories and / or history to enable captivating story telling)
» Trails connects to local communities (Trail Towns) and nearby attractions
» Quality and sufficient comfort and convenience amenities are available
» Effective signage and wayfinding and a unique trail brand
» Readily available and easy to use trip planning resources
» Trail is sustainably designed and actively managed & maintained to ensure the visitor experience
» Trail contains both guided and self-guided opportunities
» Trail is actively marketed and promoted

4. Diversity of Uncrowded Experiences

From urban to backcountry, from mountains to prairie, from motorized to non-motorized, difficult to easy, and summer to winter, the region's diversity and opportunity to provide diverse trail experiences was recognized as a driving asset. Participants identified the opportunity to establish signature trails along the highway 2 corridor, connecting the region's lakes and in the west country. Participants also signaled the need to ensure the experiences embraced both motorized and non-motorized users in all seasons. Ensuring this diversity will ensure the region's trails tourism offering appeals to the widest range of target markets. And, the best part, the region's trails are relatively uncrowded unlike nearby regions in the National Parks, Kananaskis or major urban centers.

5. Much Work Needs to be Done

Though there is a significant supply of trails in the region few to none of the trail experiences are market or export ready. A great deal of work needs to be done to upgrade the existing trails to meet the signature trail characteristics and ensure they are at a market or export ready standard.

6. Sustainable Design & Management is a Requirement

Although trails were deemed important, consideration of environmental concerns played a key role in the discussion. Participants stressed that any trails that are to be included in the signature trail network must be sustainable. That is, they must be well designed, actively maintained and managed to avoid negative impacts to environmental and cultural values while also respecting adjacent land user and landowners.

7. There are Operational Challenges

Volunteer trail organizations have highly dedicated volunteers. However, developing and even obtaining approvals to maintain trails is difficult in the current land management and political environment. Volunteers trail managers are facing considerable barriers in trying to develop and maintain trails. There are no clear regulations supporting the designation of trails and protecting the quality of trails on the land base from other land use impacts. Outside of Public Land Use Zones, there are no regulations that enable the designation and management of permitted uses of trails. Though these challenges are typically provincial policy in nature, they are or will become barriers to developing and maintaining a strong trail tourism marketplace in the region and to realizing the region's potential.

8. Signature Trail Experiences to Pursue

A wide range of potential signature trail experiences were identified through the engagement program. There was support for the development of both non-motorized and motorized signature trail experiences in the region. In addition, there is interest in seeing trail experiences with moderate to low levels of development and ranging from an easy to challenging level of difficulty.

Three specific trail experiences emerged as the top trails tourism experiences for the region to pursue:

» Year-round non-motorized single use hiking trail that is minimally developed and moderately challenging.

» Summer only non-motorized long-distance cycling trail that is moderately developed and varying levels of difficulty.

» Year-round mixed use (ATV, Off-Highway Motorcycle, Side by Side, Mountain Bike, Pedestrian) trail that is moderately developed and moderately challenging or easy.

2.2 VERBATIM INPUT

The following sections present the verbatim input received through each engagement tactic.

2.2.1 TRAIL ORGANIZATION & TOURISM OPERATOR WORKSHOP

A fully day workshop was held with trail organizations and tourism operators. The goals of the workshop were to:

- Introduce the project planning process, study area, purpose and answer questions.
- Define characteristics of signature trails
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses in the trails tourism sector in Central AB
- Identify opportunities to strengthen the trails tourism sector and 5-8 signature experiences
- Uncover the issues, challenges and considerations that may influence trails tourism in the region

In total, 18 participants attended the workshop including individuals from:

- Tourism Red Deer
- Sylvan Lake EDO
- Red Deer County
- City of Red Deer
- Town of Blackfalds
- Red Deer Hikers
- Rocky ATV Society
- Clearwater Trails Initiative
- Alberta Equine Trail Riding Association
- Alberta Trail Net
- Central Alberta Regional Trails Society
- Central Alberta Mountain Club
- Red Deer Association for Bicycle Commuting
- Alberta Hiking Association
- Lacombe Regional Tourism
- Hela Ventures
- Pursuit Adventures
- Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
- Olds Institute
- Olds Gotcha Jean's
- Alpine Club of Canada
- Clearwater County
- Nordegg OHV Society
- Miner's Café
- Red Deer Ramblers/Central Alberta Volks Sport
- Frontier Lodge
- Turple Brothers/BHAS/AOHVA

Photo Credit: Heritage Ranch

The following section presents the themes that emerged and the verbatim input that was received from workshop participants.

Input Received

1. What characteristics are the most important to making a trail a "signature trail"?

Working individually, participants were asked to identify which characteristics are most important to making a signature trail. Participants documented their ideas on sticky notes. Facilitators themed the ideas for later prioritization.

Characteristics Most Important to Making A Signature Trail

Intended Activities are Clearly Designated (2 votes)

- Tailored to Audience
- Length/time to complete
- Unique activity
- Reward for effort
- Non-motorized Only
- Could be separated by time
- Non-motorized, not crowded, very important
- Single purpose use by time (designation)

Accessibility (2 votes)

- Easy highway access with a large, well marked staging area with amenities
- Accessible
- Accessibility
- Accessible
- Accessible to tours (easy to find and book accommodation)

Characteristics Most Important to Making A Signature Trail

Highly Scenic (15 votes)

- Scenic
- High scenic views
- Scenic
- Scenic – along the way and destination
- Views
- Scenic – most important
- A signature unique view or experience
- Uniqueness
- Great views and points of interest along the way
- Great views

Comfort & Convenience Amenities (15 votes)

- Trailheads – washrooms
- Services
- Good facilities
- Washroom availability
- Staging areas/restrooms/facility
- Outhouses in popular high traffic areas
- Washrooms
- Stock potable water – available for day trips/half day trips
- Available amenities – clean campsites, hotels/restaurants, washrooms, shelters
- Amenities – day use; tie rails, trailer parking in staging areas, stock water, equine access on maps
- Amenities – access to food, washrooms, accommodation parking, shelter
- Campgrounds on trail
- Appropriate but minimal facilities

Characteristics Most Important to Making A Signature Trail

Signage, Wayfinding & Trip Planning (11 votes)

- Trail signage (logical with GPS location)
- Signage
- Good regional trails map giving visitors a full list of available experience options
- Good signage – historic sites noted, events in region occurring near or on trail, wildlife or natural features to look for
- Accurate information on trails, including hazards
- Identification/markers
- Must be well marked or have guides available
- Trailhead parking and signage
- Signage (map boards)
- Wayfinding
- Signage
- Adequate but minimal signage
- Appropriate signage on trail
- Trailhead with signage, washrooms, garbage receptacles and parking
- Trail signs
- Signed parking
- Researchable
- Trail fork mapped

Attractions (7 votes)

- More options to do things other than the trails ie; something to do after a hike (hot tub)
- Quality Destinations
- Variety of scenery and terrain
- Bridge scenery like Cowichan Trail
- Scenery like bridges and tunnels (Kettle Valley Trail)
- Landmarks

Characteristics Most Important to Making A Signature Trail

Quality, Multi-day & Connected (1 vote)

- Clear beginning and end-points plus links to other trails or destinations nearby
- Quiet, so nature can be appreciated (birds, animals, hiking)
- Quality of surface
- Trail quality – condition
- Must be at least 100K walking trail
- Trailheads through landscape (minimum of urban walking)
- Cleared and developed
- Connectivity

Safety (1 vote)

- Safety infrastructures front country, natural state back country
- Safety (maintenance) ie; grooming, level of skill
- Well maintained, safe for travel
- Safe, permission to play values

Accommodations (2 votes)

- Accommodation – nearby but not along the trail (hiking), remoteness feeling
- Must have places to stay (hostels, b&b, inn) and eat along the route
- Amenities – overnight; tie rails and high lines, large living Q, trailer parking at staging areas, stock water at staging area, equine access noted on maps

Story Telling & Interpretation Opportunities (2 votes)

- Setting
- Interpretive history – natural and human
- Tell a story – interpretation

Uniqueness (2 votes)

- Wilderness experience
- Uniqueness – experience

Characteristics Most Important to Making A Signature Trail

Adventure & Challenge for All Abilities (4 votes)

- Multiple routes – easy, moderate, hard
- Challenging but open to all levels of riders/hikers
- Adventure
- Challenging

Sustainably Managed (13 votes)

- Not overcrowded
- Trail awareness and etiquette
- Follow contours of land (flows)
- Respectful to environment and surroundings
- Ability to handle the amount of traffic anticipated without detracting from the experience
- Sustainable
- Pristine environment and trail conditions

Quietness (2 votes)

- Noise free camping opportunities

Parking Lot

- Non-motorized

Ranking

Once theming was completed, participants were each provided with 3 sticky dots. Participants were asked to identify which themes they felt were most important to creating a signature trail. The dots were placed on the theme heading cards. Dots could be allocated however the participants wished. The prioritized results are presented in the table below.

Priority Ranking	Theme	Votes
1	Highly Scenic	15
1	Comfort & Convenience Amenities	15
3	Sustainably Managed	13
4	Signage, Wayfinding & Trip Planning Information	11
5	Attractions	7
6	Uniqueness	4
7	Quietness	2
7	Intended Activities are Clearly Designated Trail	2
7	Adventure & Challenge for All Abilities	2
7	Accessibility	2
7	Story Telling & Interpretation	2
7	Accommodations	2
8	Safety	1
9	Quality, Multi-day & Connected	1

2. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of Central Alberta's current trails tourism sector?**

Participants were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Central Alberta's current trails tourism sector. Working in their breakout groups, input was documented on flip charts and each breakout group reported back.

Strengths of Central Alberta's Trails Tourism Sector

Theme 1: Diversity of Uncrowded Trail Experiences & Landscapes
- Diversity (types and uses)
- Huge Potential
- All Season Trails
- Diversity in Skill Levels and Experiences (Walking, Hiking etc.)
- Diversity of scenery & outdoor activities
- Wilderness
- Varying Landscapes
- Linear Opportunities
- Not Busy or Crowded
- Connectiveness of water

Theme 2: Visitor Attractions
- Varied Attractions
- Wildlife
- Wildlife Viewing Areas

Theme 3: Dedicated & Active Trail Volunteer Organizations & Advocates
- Local Knowledge
- Large Volunteer Based Groups
- Tourism Advocacy – Regional and Local
- Growing Active Trail Interests
- Users That Want to Work Together
- Volunteer Energy and Stewardship
- Visioning and Planning Forward
- Accessible Municipal Services

Strengths of Central Alberta's Trails Tourism Sector

Theme 4: Access to Land
- Resource Industry Access
- No Financial Barriers to Use Most Trails
- Good Land Base
- Crown Land – Provincially Owned

Theme 5: Location of the Region
- Central Location
- Good Reputation
- Amenities, Lots of Other Things To Do

Weaknesses of Central Alberta's Trails Tourism Sector

Theme 1: Lack of Information, Signage & Trip Planning
- Unidentified – Don't Know Where to Access Information
- Wayfinding/Signage, Seamless Through Municipalities
- Signage
- Trail Apps

Theme 2: Lack of Infrastructure & Amenities on Existing Trails
- Parking
- Access
- Amenities
- Water
- Sewer
- Paving
- Dust Control
- Staging Areas – Pull Offs

Theme 3: Lack of Clear Process, Support & Regulations for Trail Development & Management

- Crown Land Limitations for Trail Development and Maintenance
- Trails are Undervalued
- Poor Government Management - Approval Process Political Will (Provincial and Municipal) and Buy-In
- Regulations Around Maintaining Trails (Government Red Tape)
- Political Resistance to Trails
- Loss of Designated Non-Motorized Trails to Motorized (Users) Due to Lack of Enforcement
- Need to Follow Provincial Regulations and Management Plans
- Permission to Maintain Trails
- Recognition of Value of Trails
- Recreation
- Commercialization
- AEP Takes Little Consideration of Tourism
- Red Tape is Too Much for Trail Maintenance and Construction
- Levels of Government
- Interdepartmental
- Property Owners
- Processes and Permitting
- Regional
- Licenses
- Process Time, Political Will
- Identify How To Implement
- Trail Act – To Mandate Trails (MGA) and Recreation
- Ownership to Maintain Trails (Adopt A Trail)
- Lack of Clarity for Future Development
- Local Interpretation
- Stay Away from Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Environmental

Weaknesses of Central Alberta's Trails Tourism Sector

Theme 4: Support for Volunteers
- Support for Volunteer Groups
- Focus on Areas Where Volunteers/Operations Are Willing to do Work

Theme 5: Private Land Ownership
- Private Ownership of Land
- Landowner Resistance (Connectivity)

Theme 6: Cooperation & Coordination
- Municipal Cooperation/Collaboration
- Coordination of Stakeholders
- Collaboration Between Government and Other Stakeholders

Theme 7: Marketing and Promotion
- Marketing – Handouts or Brochures
- More Experience in Trails at Information Centres
- Premature Promotion – Don't Say You Have It When You Don't
- NIMBY
- Marketing Needs to Reflect the Experience

Theme 8: Action Required
- Long History of Talking About Trails – Leadership Needed for Implementation

Theme 9: Planning
- Poor Connectivity
- Wildlife
- Social Issues – Urban Tent Cities

Theme 10: Funding
- Funding from Local AEP
  - » Capital
  - » Operational

3. **Which Trails Tourism Experiences are the Greatest Opportunities to Pursue?**

Facilitators presented Alberta Environments and Park's Trail Classification System to participants. Using this system, participants were asked to identify which trail tourism experience types represented the greatest opportunities to pursue. Each recommended trail experience were written on an idea rating forms and posted on the wall. Duplicate experience types were removed. Participants then used the forms voting system to identify which trail experiences they felt were greatest priorities. The following trail experiences emerged and are presented in order of priority:

- Year-round non-motorized single use hiking trail that is minimally developed and moderately challenging (12 votes).
- Summer only non-motorized single use long-distance biking trail that is moderately developed and varying levels of difficulty (12 votes).
- Year-round, mixed use (ATV, OHM, SxS, Mountain Bike, Hike) trail that is moderately developed and moderately challenging (12 Votes).
- Winter use motorized and single use trails (Sled/ATV pulling pods for short trips or overnight) moderate level of development and easy to use (11 Votes).
- Year-round mixed use (ATV, OHM, SxS, MTB, Hike) trail that is moderately developed and easy for users (10 Votes).
- Summer use, non-motorized single use equestrian trail that is minimally developed and has a moderate level of difficulty (9Votes).
- Year-round, motorized single use (OHV, Dirt Bike, SXS) that is moderately developed with a low level of challenge (8 Votes).
- Year-round, non-motorized multiuse (walking, hiking) that is moderately developed and has an easy to moderate level of difficulty (6 Votes).
- Year-round, non-motorized, multi-use (hike, bike) that is developed with an easy to moderate level of difficulty (6 Votes).
- Year-round, non-motorized multi-use (hike, bike) developed trail that has an easy level of difficulty (5 Votes).

With the priority trail experiences identified, participants used an interactive online mapping website to identify the trails that can best deliver the desired experiences. The results from this activity have been merged with the broader stakeholder Vertisee input and are presented in the Vertisee summary section below.

2.2.2 WORKSHOP FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Stakeholder who were unable to take part in the workshop, but were still interested in taking part in the project, were sent the workshop questions and encouraged to provide input via email. One response was received and is presented below.

Innisfail Follow Up Survey

1.   What organization do you represent?

Town of Innisfail

2.   Please tell me a bit about you and your organization's interest in trails and trails tourism?

The Town of Innisfail recently completed a Trails Master Plan for within the municipality. The development of new trails and the enhancement of existing trails have been identified as key factors in attracting and retaining residents and visitors, and contributing to the overall health, leisure and well-being of our citizens. At a regional level, the Town has had (and continues to have) representation on the Central Alberta Regional Trails Society (CARTS).

3.   Thinking about the world's most iconic trail experiences, what characteristics of those trails are most important to making that trail attractive to trail tourists?

- Their accessibility to the public is made clear/well-known through marketing and the availability of pertinent, easy-to-access information;
- They're safe and designated specifically for trail-based activities;
- They're surrounded by, or located within close proximity to, services and amenities targeted toward and catering to users of the trail;

Photo Credit: Sonny Bou

- They're generally free to use/access;
- They have ample parking, washrooms at trailheads, etc.;
- They're of considerable length;
- They're extremely scenic and 'photoworthy'; and
- They're experiential in nature — offering a unique experience that cannot be achieved by car (or any other means of transport).

4.   Recognizing the direction set in the Destination Management Plan, from your experience, do you believe there is further potential for the region increase the benefits of trails tourism?

Potentially — depending on potential barriers (cost, red tape, etc.).

5.   CATA is interested in Trails Tourism because of the benefits that can come from it for host communities. In your opinion, what are the major benefits that can come from trails tourism in Central Alberta if successful?

- Economic development/spinoff
- Increased visibility for the region
- Increased local leisure/lifestyle opportunities contributing to resident attraction/retention

6.   CATA also recognizes that, if not carefully managed, trails tourism can create challenges. In your opinion, what are the concerns associated with growing trails tourism in the region?

Trails tourism at the moment remains largely unexplored within my municipality. As a result, any risks, challenges, benefits and opportunities associated with it are not at this point fully known or understood. This lack of awareness and understanding — which, presumably also exists among other communities to at least some degree — could prove challenging in and of itself.

7.   Thinking about the current supply of trails tourism experiences in the region and what you know about market expectations, what are the strengths of the region's current trails tourism sector?

There does seem to be universal recognition that trails have the potential to benefit our respective communities, despite there being a lack of clarity (at this point, at least) as to what those benefits might be.

8.   Thinking about the current supply of trails tourism experiences in the region and what you know about market expectations, what are the shortcomings with the region's current trails tourism sector?

There's a lack of knowledge/awareness around current existing trails in the region (with the exception of in Red Deer, which seems to have a well-established system and an awareness thereof).

9.   Given the region's supply of trails and the region's characteristics (e.g. tourism settings, scenery, landscapes), what signature trail experiences do you think Central Alberta is currently best positioned to provide? Please be as specific as possible (e.g. activity types, seasons, length, difficulty level, level of development, general location).

I believe, given the relatively flat landscape in the eastern portion of our CATA region, there exists opportunity to explore considerable road-biking trail opportunities — particularly in the summer. If marketed right, the flat, open nature of some of our roads could be a draw for international visitors, and in particular those from more densely-populated countries where such vast land/skyscapes are not found.

Perhaps, given the scenery and terrain in the Nordegg area, there also exists opportunity to develop mountain-based trails that would rival and compete with those in the Canmore/Banff area — again in the summer specifically.

Given the amount of snow we receive in the region each year, it may be worth exploring opportunities associated with snowshoeing/winter walking.

10. From your knowledge, are there any specific trails that you feel already are or have the potential to become signature trails that can motivate travel to the region?

Not at present — although this is likely due to my own lack of awareness of what we currently have throughout the region. I believe there are likely some in the Nordegg area with which I am unfamiliar.

11. Thinking holistically (e.g. from trip planning to supporting services to ontrail amenities), what needs to be done to optimize the region's trails tourism potential and establish a network of signature trail experiences?

First, an understanding of our associated strengths and opportunities must be established. What trails, if any, do we currently have that could be considered for 'signature' status? If none, which trails can be developed and built out accordingly? Then, a consensus must be established among stakeholders as to which trails should be focused on with respect to the intended outcome(s) of the report. I believe this engagement is a good first step.

12. What are the major issues, challenges, and barriers to optimizing the region's trails tourism potential?

Again, a lack of awareness: In proceeding with the project, it may be wise (if possible) to demonstrate the why such trails are, or could be, beneficial to local tourism, economic development, etc. As I mentioned previously, I believe this understanding to be somewhat limited at present — on a regional level, at least.

13. What could be done to enhance the effectiveness of trails tourism marketing in the region?

Ensure the availability of the necessary funding, resources and capacity in order to do so.

14. Are there any other important considerations you think we need to keep in mind or address as we work with the region to develop the Master Plan?

Stakeholder engagement is key. Thank you for the opportunity to participate and please consider additional such engagements going forward.

2.2.3 VERTISEE ONLINE MAPPING

An online interactive crowdsource mapping tool (Vertisee) was available to stakeholders through June and July, 2019. Seventeen (17) unique participants took part in the site. These participants provided 92 ideas on existing trails and identified an additional 39 new trail segment ideas. These ideas were "liked" an additional 31 times.

Fifty-one existing trails were identified by participants as having the potential to become a signature trail. The trails that were identified most frequently included:

- Rocky Mountain House to Nordegg Rail Trail / Abandoned Railway received the most mentions (10 mentions)
- Siffleur falls (4 mentions)
- Black Mountain Trail (4 mentions)
- The Great Trail (TCT) from Blackfalds to Lacombe (3 mentions)
- Nova Nature Trail system (3 mentions)
- Glacier Trail (epic single-track mountain bike trail)
- Crimson Lake Trail (3 mentions)
- Coliseum Trail (3 mentions)

Participants also proposed a number of new trails or trail connections that could become signature trails. New trails included:

- Sylvan Lake to Red Deer along Highway 11A (3 mentions)
- Lacombe to Gull Lake (2 mentions)
- Bentley to Sylvan Lake (2 mentions)

Figure 1, illustrates the location of existing trails that were proposed to become signature trails and how many times each trail was identified by participants. Figure 1 also shows where participants thought new signature trails could be developed.
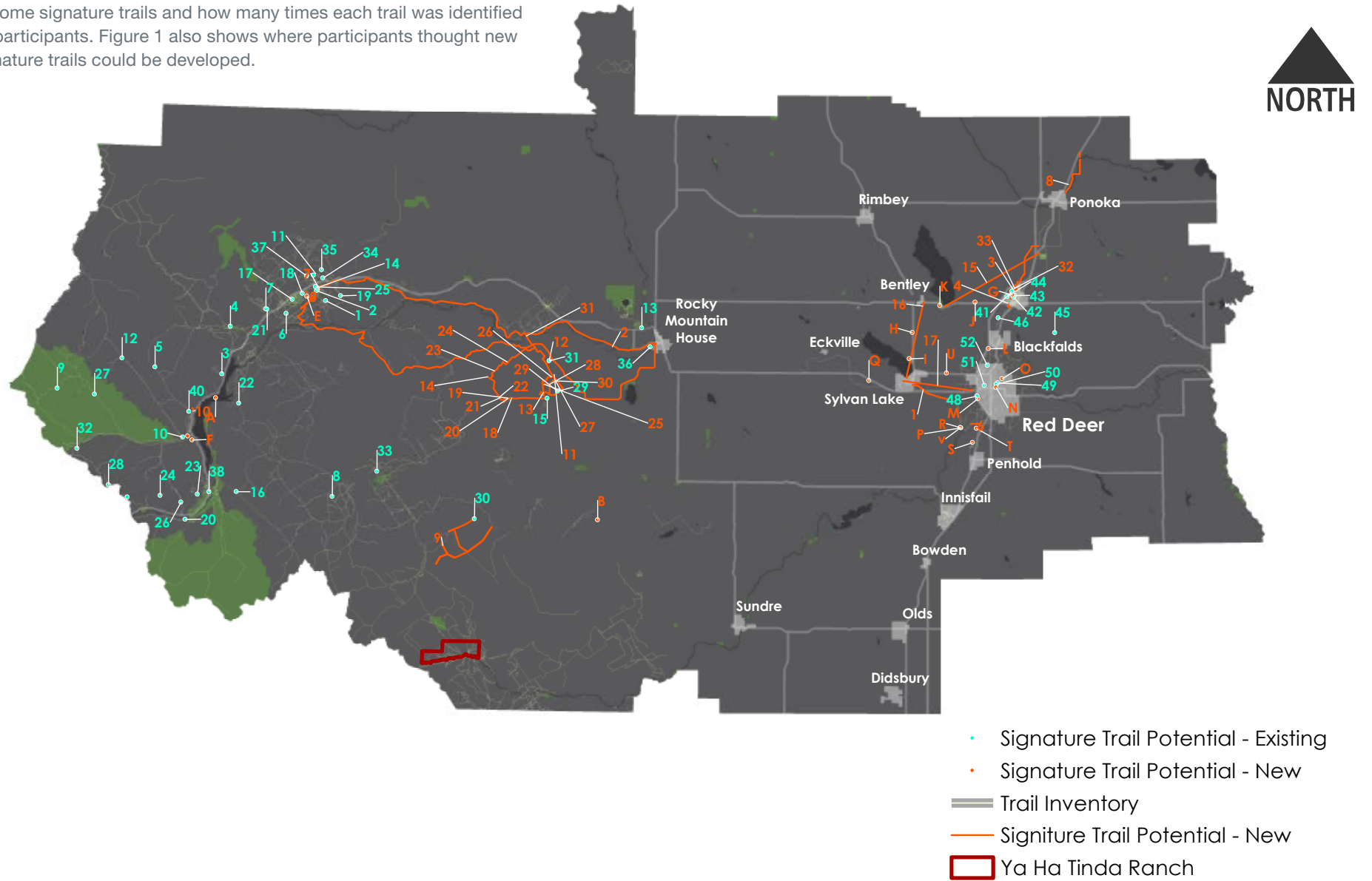

Figure 1 Vertisee Map

In addition to identifying potential signature trails, participants provided input on why they felt each trail could become a signature trail as well as what needs to be done in order for the trail to meet the signature trail characteristics. Table 1 summarizes the input for each trail that was nominated.

Database Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Brazeau Ridge MTB Trail Network	0	• An entire network of DH and XC mountain bike along Brazeau Ridge above Nordegg	• Some cleanup, new bridging, new signage, LOCAL INPUT FIRST AND FOREMOST!!	Clearwater County	1
Abandoned Railway - Rocky Mtn House to Nordegg	10	• Attraction • Multi use	• Repair 3 trussels to be assessable by hike, bike, atv • Official trail	Clearwater County	2
Allstones Lake Trail	1	• *No Input Provided*	• signage, trail repair on sloped area	Clearwater County	3
Big Horn Creek	1	• Water Fall • Great riding for skill levels	• Needs cleared and signage	Clearwater County	4
Bighorn River Trail	0	• Backpacking	• Cleaned	Clearwater County	5
Black Canyon Trail	0	• Well established and popular single track that connects the Shunda/Goldeye Eco Trails into a large network of single and double track trails along the North Saskatchewan River Valley	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	6
Black Mountain Trail	4	• Great Scenery/Great Trails • We need more bike trails! (the Ecology trails don't cut it)	• Clear deadfall, signage, better toilet facility.	Clearwater County	7
Canary Creek	0	• Hummingbird/Ranger/Onion/Ram • Outstanding Country/Landscape • Hike/Bike/Horse/OHV/Backpacking	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	8
Cline Pass Trail	0	• Epic!! Backpacking in the White Goat Wilderness	• Macdonald Creek exit needs to be cleaned	Clearwater County	9

Database Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Cline River Trail	2	• Gorgeous, easy, day hike. • Provides great connectivity North and potential to extend further North along the eastern slopes. Provides good connectivity to existing trails to the West	• Clear deadfall, signage, better toilet facility.	Clearwater County	10
Coliseum Trail	3	• Moderate trail, with great view and a long ridge. Some parking, pit toilets. • Scenery	• More parking and signage on the trail. • Signage, outhouse below summit	Clearwater County	11
Coral Creek Trail	0	• Epic Backpacking is very wild country		Clearwater County	12
Crimson Lake	3	• Great year-round location, multi use • Provide better linkage from trail around the lake back to Rocky Mountain House. Include signage washrooms and rest areas.	• Better toilets, parking lot	Clearwater County	13
Discovery Park Pump Track	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	14
Dry Creek	0	• This trail parallels secondary highway 752 heading west. From this trail you can connect to Base line mountain (fire lookout), falls creek (access to the forks of the ram, Peppers lake, Onion lake, south ram, north ram, Gap lake, Ram mountain (fire lookout), Meadow's cabin, Clearwater river, Big horn riding area.	• Signage, a few bridges or culverts, minor trail clearing	Clearwater County	15
Farley Lake Trail	0	• Good, well established trails that give access into the North and South Ram river valleys (and tributaries) from Siffleur staging. This is another backpacker haven with endless route options.	• Signage	Clearwater County	16

Database Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Fish Lake Multiuse Trail	1	• Best option for easy accessible (wheel chair access) trail in Nordegg • Continuation of the Nordegg Trail between 734 and town	• Durable surface, board walk required for 3km out of 4.5km	Clearwater County	17
Frontier Lodge Trail	0	• Provides access to Nordegg	• Gravel substrate for multi-use	Clearwater County	18
GetRDone	0	• One of the main 12level/Stonehenge/ Brazeau Ridge trails describe to the West		Clearwater County	19
Glacier Trail	3	• Epic MTB Trail!! • Beautifully scenic well established single track bike trail that makes up the more popular half of the Kootenay Plains figure 8 loop	• It is a joke that Parks Canada has yet to allow us to continue the less than 5kms from the boundary to highway 93 through the Corona Creek fire debris. Get it done and we will have a 30kms family friendly World Class trail with unparalleled scenery. Currently we • Have a 48kms out and back - not acceptable. // signage and a second foot bridge across Louden Creek • Nothing but some signage	Clearwater County	20
Gonika Creek Trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• Its not Crescent falls	Clearwater County	21
Headwaters Trail North	0	• Horse/Backpacking/Biking • Access into the North and South Ram Rivers from the Bighorn Dam	• Minor cleanup and possible work at the North Ram Crossing	Clearwater County	22
Kinglette Lake Trail	0	• Excellent alternative to Allstones. Majestic views of the Plains	• Nothing	Clearwater County	23

Database Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Lake of the Falls South Trail	0	• Backpacking, Epic Scenery, Multitude of destinations (including a Landslide Lake/ wild horse loop) (also including cline river/pinto lake/michelle lakes loop). • This will likely become one of the corridors premier routes.	• Needs Nothing!	Clearwater County	24
Lake View	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	25
Landslide Lake Trail	0	• Backpacking. The multi day loop (Lake of the Falls South Trail, Entry Lake, Landslide Lake Wild Horse) is an outstanding trip.	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	26
Macdonald Creek Trail	0	• Backpacking in the White Goat Wilderness	• Bushwack needs to be cleaned	Clearwater County	27
Michele Lakes Trail	0	• Among the best in the Rockies, backpacking haven • Pinto Lake, Sunset Pass/Cline River loops	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	28
Trail Name Could Not Be Determined Based on Data Provided	0	• View point	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	29
Trail Name Could Not Be Determined Based on Data Provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	30
Trail Name Could Not Be Determined Based on Data Provided	0	• Large erratic rock	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	31

Database Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Pinto Lake Trail	0	• Sunset Pass access, Michelle Lakes access, Cline River access, Cataract Creek access	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	32
Ram Fire Lookout	0	• Lookout Tower; hike has impressive views, not too hard (moderate hike).	• Parking & signage.	Clearwater County	33
Ranger Station Trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	34
Ridgeline Trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	35
RMH Historic Site to RMH	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	36
Shunda meadows loop	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	37
Siffleur falls	4	• Good trail head, good year-round, popular already. Fairly easy trail with great views • Historic Route from Louise to the Plains • Great trails, waterfall	• Parking lot could be a bit bigger to accommodate more vehicles. • Parks needs to allow cleanup within the Wilderness area. Years of accumulated deadfall is embarrassing - the trail itself is in great condition.	Clearwater County	38
Thompson Creek Trail	0	• Waterfalls, Cline Tarns, Mt. Cline mountaineering	• Signage	Clearwater County	39
Whitegoat Falls Trail	0	• Pretty, people like it, easy. Good view.	• Not where it's mapped - death plunge! Starts in the middle of a waste transfer station - not appealing.	Clearwater County	40
Barnett Lake Trail	0	• Close to the water. Great views of the wildlife. Single track nature trails	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	41
Cranna Lake	0	• Paved 1.9k path. Great for strollers.	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	42

Database Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Elizabeth Lake Loop Trail	1	• Natural chipped wide trail. Very scenic, close to the water.	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	43
Westview Trail	0	• Great little nature trail in a great wooded area.	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	44
Nova Nature Trails	3	• Attractive new quiet walking area with bridges, walkways, and ponds. Bird watching and wildlife can be viewed. • Could have directions to nearby Ellis Bird Farm which is a destination on its own so would work as a signatiure trail. Contaact Myrna Pearman at Ellis Bird Farm • Farm • The location of this site is incorrect. It should be positioned to the south of Highway 597 & just north of the Joffre petrochemical plant. It is currently a good year round walking trail location that could be enhanced with upgraded washroom facilities and could also have potential for cyclists should it be connected to the Blackfalds - Lacombe TCT.	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	45
The Great Trail (TCT - Blackfalds to Lacombe)	3	• Could be enhanced with better washrooms and bike rental services. • This piece is part of the Great Trail	• Needs trail building in the north (hazlett Lake) and southwest (near Tuttle)	Lacombe / Lacombe County	46
Panther River Trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Municipal District Of Bighorn No. 8	47

Database Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Heritage Park	0	• Cross Country trails - Expansion to connect existing loops new. Concept loops are showed in CORD Multi-Modal Transportation plan	• Heritage Ranch could be a winter wonderland for fat bikes, kick sleds, xc skis, and snowshoes. Would need programming and rental operations maybe housed out of ranch house • Winter events and temporary installations. Winnipeg's warming huts --- but could Red Deer relevant installations that are spread out along the trails. Or spread out in different nodes of parks across the city.	Red Deer	48
Oxbows to River Bend	0	• This is the spine of Red Deer. 8-80 safety but not having to cross a road.	• Needs a pedestrian bridge from McKenzie Trails to Three Mile Bend.	Red Deer	49
Red Deer Mountain Bike Park	1	• Great facility • A high standard mtb park. Impresses riders.	• Would benefit from some branding • Branding. It is a bit of hidden gem particularly for out-of-towners	Red Deer	50
Red Deer Multi use Trails	1	• It would support more active transport. Great for tourism. Build on the great trails we have and the wonderful nature we enjoy.	Separated bike lanes, improved connectivity. Looking at the map one can see how disconnected the routes are. No bike infrastructure in downtown. More and better would enhance economic activity in the downtown. Also, connect Celebration plaza through downtown to the new Capstone project. The evidence is very clear that bike/pedestrian infrastructure is good for the economy and well being of a city.	Red Deer	51
The Great Trail (TCT-Blackfalds to Red Deer)	0	• Lots of really nice parkland scenery. Nice to connect the smaller communities with Red Deer. Lots of economic potential. lacombe is doing a great job with excellent restaurants, brewery etc.	• Make it all TCT - currently there are some parts that go on the old C& E trail, lots of people don't like to bike on the roads. Separated bike /walking trail.	Red Deer	52

The following table presents the proposed new signature trails (points & lines), the number of times the trail was proposed by participants, the themed rationales for each and themes for what participants felt would need to happen in order for each identified trail to become a signature trail.

User Submitted Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Points					
**Talk to the Locals!	0	• Nordegg and the Bighorn Reserve	• We may be small in numbers but we KNOW and Love this place! We are frustrated with decisions being made from offices with little to no in person and in depth consultation. Set a date and come out and talk with us! You will walk away with a wealth of information.	Clearwater County	A
Clearwater Trails Initiative	0	• OHV & Snowmobiling trails. Some signage, some parking.	• Needs to be made a recognized trail.	Clearwater County	B
Cline River Gallery/ Viewpoint	0	• Great winter hiking / snowshoeing & ice climbing access.	• Official trail	Clearwater County	C
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	D
No trail name provided	0	• Links Fish Lake to Nordegg and Rail Trail	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	E
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Clearwater County	F
Elizabeth Lake Loop Trail	0	• Connects Burman University to Cranna Lake via Lake Anne	• County and City of Lacombe need to look at water levels.	Lacombe / Lacombe County	G
Bentley to Sylvan Lake	2	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	H
Cross coutry ski and snowshoe trails	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	I

User Submitted Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Points					
Lacombe to Gull Lake	2	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	J
Snowshoe and cross country ski trails	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	K
No trail name provided	1	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	L
No trail name provided		• Need to add separate paved trail beside gravel roadway to make Red Deer to Blackfalds section of the Great Trail comparable to the section north of Blackfalds to Lacombe. Add washrooms, rest areas, and signage.	• *No Input Provided*	Lacombe / Lacombe County	
Heritage Ranch Winter Wonderland	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Red Deer	M
Rail to trail	0	• The placement of icon may not be on map correct. Rail to trail on old railway line.	• capital investment and operating funding	Red Deer	N
Red Deer to Mint Law via duct	0	• Placement of icon may not be correct!	• Needs capital and operational funding and approval by County. Perhaps an opportunity for 3rd party operator.	Red Deer	O
ACR Mintlaw Trail	1	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Red Deer County	P
Mintlaw Rail Trail	0	• Passage over historic bridge over Red Deer River, through forested farmland to Sylan Lake.	• Renovations to bridge, trail-building and signage, buy-in from adjacent landowners.	Red Deer County	Q
Mintlaw Trail	1	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Red Deer County	R

User Submitted Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Points					
Red Deer to Penhold	0	• Connect all of these trails for a really nice afternoon bike ride or run.	• A few more amenities along the way, perhaps some toilet facilities, rest stops, view points.	Red Deer County	S
Red Deer to Springbrook/ Penhold	0	• Goes through the old highway route, historic value. Nice to connect local communities to Red deer. Has good economic potential for Penhold and Springbrook.	• Springbrook already has some trails so it would be good to connect to those.	Red Deer County	T
Sylvan Lake to Red Deer via 11A	3	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*	Red Deer County	U
No trail name provided		• Love the trestle bridge. This would be a fabulous trail. Attractive to European and American cycle tourists.	• *No Input Provided*	Red Deer County	V

Photo Credit: TrailForks

User Submitted Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Lines					
ACR Mintlaw trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		1
Adventure Bike loop and ATV trail	0	• It would give endure bikes and OHMV a great train to follow encompassing over 200 kms of riding. And links several trails (existing and potential) together.	• There are several creek crossings that would have to be bridged and GPSed.		2
Blue Bird Trail/TCT by Cranna Lake, Lake Anne, Elizabeth Lake, Henners Pond	0	• Beautiful trail through Lacombe passing by many water bodies. Exercise Equipment Stations, including the Bill Nielsen Exercise Trail, Trees & scenic areas.	• More Signage. Interpretive Signage in process at Elizabeth Lake. Control of Water in Elizabeth Lake. Board walk & one section of private land needing to be developed.		3
Blue Bird/Trans Canada Trail link	0	• Trail goes through Federal Research Station & Michener Park - Variety of Trees, water, Recreation Areas (Accessible playground, sportsfields, skatepark, Parking) & Group area & Campground.	• Better/more Signage		4
Connecting to Trail Head for Rail Trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• Gravel substrate,		5
Old Rail Line trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		6
Repair Trestles	0	• *No Input Provided*	• Repair Trussels so people can cross hike, bike, atv		7
TCT	6	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		8
These trails are very picturesk and exist anyway.	0	• It can meet several stake holder requirements from hikers, OHV, sledders, fishing, hunting, horse back.	• Bi annual maintenance		9

User Submitted Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Lines					
Vision Quest	0	• Difficult climb but amazing views.	• Trail head amenities. Waste transfer station is the trailhead.		10
No trail name provided	0	• Great trail that can offer a longer day trip that will challange all skill levels.	• Bridges, culverts, and ground work will be needed		11
No trail name provided	0	• Really large rock, area of interest	• Floating bridge needed to access Erratic Rock		12
No trail name provided	0	• Offers a bypass optioin rather than crossing skeg to the east	• Open up the trail of brush, install bridge over creek		13
No trail name provided	0	• River acces for fishing, lunch breaks	• Signage		14
No trail name provided	0	• Connect communities	• *No Input Provided*		15
No trail name provided	0	• Connect communities	• *No Input Provided*		16
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		17
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		18
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		19
No trail name provided	0	• Good ground conditions	• *No Input Provided*		20
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		21
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		22
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		23
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		24

User Submitted Trail Name	Agrees	Please tell us why this trail could be a signature trail:	What enhancements are needed to make this a signature trail:	Municipality	Map Label
Lines					
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		25
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		26
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		27
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		28
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		29
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		30
No trail name provided	0	• River access for fishing, picnic area	• *No Input Provided*		31
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		32
No trail name provided	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		33
ACR Mintlaw trail	0	• *No Input Provided*	• *No Input Provided*		34
Adventure Bike loop and ATV trail	0	• It would give endure bikes and OHMV a great train to follow encompassing over 200 kms of riding. And links several trails (existing and potential) together.	• There are several creek crossings that would have to be bridged and GPSed.		35
Blue Bird Trail/TCT by Cranna Lake, Lake Anne, Elizabeth Lake, Henners Pond	0	• Beautiful trail through Lacombe passing by many water bodies. Exercise Equipment Stations, including the Bill Nielsen Exercise Trail, Trees & scenic areas.	• More Signage. Interpretive Signage in process at Elizabeth Lake. Control of Water in Elizabeth Lake. Board walk & one section of private land needing to be developed.		36

2.2.4 ONLINE STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

An online survey was developed and distributed to provincial and local government and Travel Alberta. Two follow up reminders were sent to survey invitees encouraging participation. In total, 15 surveys were received. Ten of the surveys were fully completed and 5 were partially completed. Survey responses were received from the following organizations:

- Alberta Parks
- Alberta Environment & Parks
- Central Alberta Tourism Alliance
- City of Lacombe
- City of Red Deer
- Clearwater Trails Initiative
- Lacombe County
- Town of Innisfail

Photo Credit: BHAS

2.2.4.1 RESULTS

The following section presents the verbatim input received in response to each survey question.

1. Thinking about the world's most iconic trail experiences, what characteristics of those trails are most important to making that trail attractive to trail tourists?

Responses

- Spectacular and unique views. Designed for the user experience (comfortable, safe, accessible, and connected). Destinations (whether at trail ends or nodes along the way)

- A unique viewing experience by taking the trail - you see sights that you wouldn't see if you travelled down a highway or road. Restoration projects - turning previous rail lines into trails. Amenities on the trail - bike tune up stations, counters of users (example, Legacy Trail counter by Canmore)

- Accessible, parking at trail heads, washroom facilities, well kept (safe and clean),

- Location is a big one. Depending on what and individual is interested in. For those that want to experience nature, having trails going through wooded areas or wet lands is very attractive. Some like paved pathways for smooth riding or any roller equipment while others prefer to walk or hike through shake pathways. It is always nice to have interests along the way. It's not always about getting to a destination but what experiences can one have during the journey. Information stations about wildlife or iconic history, activities withing municipalities such as example, play structures, as in a log balance beam or stepping stones along the side of pathways. Small rope climbers. Benches set a certain distance for those who cant walk long distance, those with disabilities or the elderly.

- Natural wilderness areas, quality trails that are environmentally sustainable, good viewpoints with appropriate access, staging and camping areas, a local service hub (Rocky and Nordegg)

- There needs to be obvious aesthetic and experiential attractions that can compete with other similar products. Scenic vistas, rivers, lakes, wetlands, water falls, mountain view etc. are some of the key ingredients visitors seek. Tourists association Canada and Alberta with nature and mountains so it's critical to provide nature-based experiences in high quality settings to meet their expectations and standards. Another critical element is that the trail must be in

good condition, well signed and managed to meet the expectations of visitors if you expect to draw them from afar. Keep in mind if you want numbers, you need to cater to an urban population with respect to wayfinding an amenities beyond that required by hard core back country users. Much of our current use is local. You also need good access to modern amenities, comforts, services and back country campsites. To draw a broad spectrum of tourists, you will need to provide some higher end amenities as only a small portion of users are really prepared for or interested in "roughing it" too hard.

- Trail experience. Flow, views, etc. Destination trails.
- Trails heads are easily located on a map, with signage at trail head and trail markings. Trails should lead to spectacular views and/or water features, such as waterfalls, lakes, rivers, etc.
- Tranquil, next to water
- Unique landscapes, facilities in good working condition and with adequate frequency (e.g. garbage, look out points, good trail markers), well maintained trails (e.g. fallen tree removal).
- Well maintained trails that have sufficient width and adequate rest areas with seating, garbage cans and dog bag holders.
- Well maintained, easy to find and navigate, offering unique and significant landscapes and nature-based experiences that bring people into contact with nature WITHOUT destroying habitat or negatively impacting sustainability of natural resources.
- Well marked, easy to find, offering unique and exceptional nature-based experiences that bring people to places where they can experience natural and cultural heritage.
- On a base level sustainable trails are managed, mapped and maintained. They provide a trail experience that is sustainable (both environmentally sustainable and the trail is built to last). The trails provide a user a unique perspective to explore a destination and learn about the local culture and environment.
- Scenic, well signed, washroom facilities, parking to access

2.   Recognizing the direction set in the Destination Management Plan, from your experience, do you believe there is further potential for the region increase the benefits of trails tourism?

100%
Yes
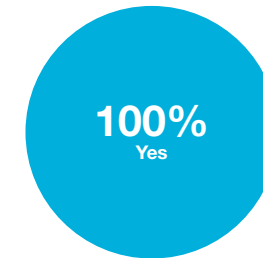
3.   Please explain why or why not.

Responses

- Central Alberta has multiple reasons to visit as a tourist - an additional way we could provide a reason is trails.
- If people in cities and people from outside Alberta know about significant trails, they will make a special trip to those places and will spend money on lodging, travel (bike, car, air, etc.), guiding, drinking and eating food.
- Increased trail usage could spur further investment in The City's trail network
- There is always room for improvement. I've given some examples on the last question. My experience is mainly municipal.
- They could be marked a lot better. For example, I wanted to ride my bike from Red Deer to Lacombe a few weekends ago, but there was no markings to indicate where the trail route was. Further to that, we need better linkages between the urban municipalities
- Through investment in facilities and maintenance, trails in the region could be enhanced enough to bring in new and more visitors.
- Very well thought-out, well maintained trails offering a diversity of experiences would attract visitation to the area.
- We can provide one or two signature trails (such as the Rocky-Nordegg Rail Trail) that Tourism operators could use as a base for further expansion or part of their visitor experiences.

- We have barely scratched the surface with trails in this region. A vast regionally connected trail system for west central Alberta is required!

- Whether through Geo-caching or people's desire to be more fit, or travel via of self-propelled mechanisms, the need for nature, Trail tourism will continue to grow.

- The west country has enormous potential yet trail standards are very low for tourist audiences and only serve locals well who know the land intimately. Also, most trails in the green zone are not designated legally so not protected (those in the existing Bighorn Public Land Use Zone are designated). There is little incentive to invest in upgrading a trail when anyone can ruin it without consequence. Work needs to be done to work with the industry interests on the landscape too, namely forestry and PNG. It requires high quality land use planning and a lot of collaboration. There was little success under the previous government in making headway. I am less optimistic about quality trails in the white zone given all the private land issues....and often lack of scenic qualities.

- We need great visitor experiences, to extend stays in the region, to showcase the region's offerings

4. CATA is interested in Trails Tourism because of the benefits that can come from it for host communities. In your opinion, what are the major benefits that can come from trails tourism in Central Alberta if successful?

Responses

- Establishing deeper and wider connections between people and trails (and parks) - support for innovation and partnerships in trail development - potentially spur greater investment in trail/parks - increased revenue for businesses and municipalities

- Bringing more people out of the house and being active. When a trail is not just a place to go from point a to point b but a destination of it's own it will bring more interest to more people. You get to meet more people in your community if marketed in this way.

- Community economic development and diversification, greater environmental stewardship and sustainability: if there is a culture of using TRAILS instead of meandering all over the landscape randomly, that is better in the long term for conserving the wildlife and environmental values that attract the visitors to the area.

- Economic Development - People stopping to eat/sleep in the community as well as people loving our trails & wanting to move here. Active Living - Health Benefits Mental Benefits - People who get out into nature are happier!

- Economic Development - people stay in hotels/BnBs, eat out at our restaurants, enjoy our other tourist attractions. Resource for existing residents - enjoy a staycation in Central Alberta by using our trails! For a community like Lacombe County, it could benefit us by providing exposure to agriculture in our area.

- Economic development by bringing people to areas for multiple days for recreation opportunities. Also trails ensure that the environment is protected by limiting recreational footprint to designated areas/corridors. This will ensure the long term sustainability of environmental values that attract people to the area in the first place.

- Increased tourism, Increased user experience, Environmentally responsible trails!

- Local accommodation and restaurant businesses, which profits local business owners and also create local jobs to clean, cook and guide.

- More local spending from people making a point to visit the region, Central Alberta will become better known throughout Canada, and possibly North America, large sporting events could be attracted to the region to use the trail system in all seasons, and it could also draw people to move to the region

- Possible expansion of existing tourism businesses as well as more visitors to service hubs. Trails tourism could be a piece of a larger central Alberta experience designed to attract and keep visitors in the area for a longer period of time.

- Increased spending and overnight stays, for every hour one drive to reach a destination they need 4 things to do

5. CATA also recognizes that, if not carefully managed, trails tourism can create challenges. In your opinion, what are the concerns associated with growing trails tourism in the region?

Responses

- Attracting more people to an area brings more risk of environmental degradation. Creating more trails means more costs associated with ongoing maintenance.

- I am not aware of challenges or concerns with increasing trail tourism in Red Deer.

- Increasing tourism beyond trail and infrastructure carrying capacity.

- Indigenous peoples who are exercising treaty and aboriginal rights and practicing

traditional and ceremonial events on Crown land. We must take better care to avoid significant cultural sites so that Indigenous peoples have places to be without being disturbed or having sites damaged by non-indigenous recreationalists. Another challenge is ensuring trails are sustainable and well placed and maintained so that environmental impacts are minimized. Many current trails contribute to erosion which reduces fish habitat quality and is contributing to loss of habitat for species at risk, such as bull trout. Educating recreationalists is also a challenge and recreationalist need to understand that it is illegal to drive OHVs or wash vehicles or tires in water bodies. Conflicts among recreation users is also a challenge, example being mountain bikes and hikers or winter fat bikes and cross country skiers.

- Land Owners (getting their buy-in) Litter & Vandalism

- On-going maintenance costs, municipal liability, increase in crime and trespassing, and drug use on trails (e.g. needle debris)

- Residents will voice that it causes crime concern, however in our experience we have had little issues with our existing trails.

- Trails require ongoing maintenance so without the ongoing operating budgets to keep them safe and operational, they will degrade over time. Also creating NEW trails on previously undisturbed footprint would be bad for ecological sustainability, so trail development/enhancement should stick to previously disturbed linear footprints.

- Vandalism, garbage, depending on the area, if heavily populated and secluded areas are in the area crime could be an issue

- We need to be able to not only build but maintain the trails, staging areas and campsites so sustainable funding is a must whether it is private, government or user pay. We have to be able to manage numbers and timing of visitors to keep trails sustainable. Tourism operators need to cooperate to provide "packages" with the variety and planning that visitors are looking for and will keep them in the area for more than just one short experience.

- Capacity issues (ie land base and trail not set up for significant increase in users) conflict with industry/other users off trail access to inappropriate land bases (private/industrial) cost to maintain a sustainable system human waste management

- People not abiding by the Leave No Trace concept

6. Thinking about the current supply of trails tourism experiences in the region and what you know about market expectations, what are the strengths of the region's current trails tourism sector?

Responses

- Varied experiences and uses (urban to backcountry; snowshoeing to marathons) - Drawing on the unique landscapes and history of the region

- Events exist like the Bill Nielse Trail Run. We have the TCT We have a Trail from Bentley to Gull Lake - a very popular tourist attraction already The paved trail from Blackfalds to Lacombe Many of our trails are next to water - Lacombe Lake, Cranna Lake, Elizabeth Lake, Gull Lake etc. Both Paved & Natural Trails exist

- Having the Trans Canada Trail connect our communities together with a fully paved pathway is a big strength. I am unaware of how this trail system is used during winter months. Our portion is cleared during that time.

- I'm not sure

- Lots of trails exist throughout some very beautiful and unique landscapes that are currently not too crowded.

- The west country has remarkable wildlife and beautiful landscapes that really offer a "wilderness" experience. Nothing is (yet) overcrowded or overdeveloped.

- There are a lot of potential trails over a large region. We have some management experience in the Bighorn Backcountry, it just needs more funding and planning. There are many local, experienced trail builders and small tourism operators that could do more and expand with better funding models. We can provide a variety of trails, motorized and non-motorized through different seasons.

- Viewscapes and natural attractions, such as mountains, lakes and rivers.

- Viewshed. Trail user experience.

- Scenery and variety

7. Thinking about the current supply of trails tourism experiences in the region and what you know about market expectations, what are the shortcomings with the region's current trails tourism sector?

Responses

- - Possibly not a strong awareness among people outside of the region. Anecdotally, I find many people only realize Red Deer has great trails after visiting for an unrelated reason. - Not a compelling angle ex. come here for the trails. - Programming around trail use and experiences could be more extensive and varied - Regional trail routes (that are 100% safe, attractive, comfortable) that utilize unique landscapes and amenities could be strengthened and expanded I'm not sure

- In some ways just thinking about laying the trails but not what else can be done to make it a destination instead of a way to get somewhere.

- Lack of information for those visiting. where are the trails? how can we use them to connect to experiences? It would take individual research to find this, it is not readily available to those visiting.

- Lack of trail experience depending upon user. ie lack of non motorized trails between Nordegg and Rocky Mountain house. Unsustainable trails. Lack of infrastructure like camping and staging to support the trail based activities.

- Linking Lacombe to Ponoka for the TCT, Red Deer to the Blindman Bridge (TCT) and Lacombe to Gull Lake. Finalizing the Connections.

- Many are not well marked, well promoted, or easy to find. Many hiking trails in the area are used by people who know they are there, and information about them is shared informally and through social media.

- Many trails are not easy to find, not well marked, and rules are not enforced. Little to no trail maintenance occurs so it is left to users to maintain. Not many facilities such as proper toilets or parking, so as trails tourism increases there will be increasing problems with waste throughout the backcountry and challenges with respect to public safety due to parking alongside the highway.

- The processes for approving and designating trails are cumbersome, expensive, and long, particularly in the large vacant crown land areas. We need to be innovative when managing for industrial, agricultural and recreational uses as well as sustaining the environment.

- The region is not well known or advertised as a destination. The region will be competing with Banff and Jasper National Parks.

- No pull offs, parking, signage, washrooms, not connected to each other

8. Given the region's supply of trails and the region's characteristics (e.g. tourism settings, scenery, landscapes), what signature trail experiences do you think Central Alberta is currently best positioned to provide? Please be as specific as possible (e.g. activity types, seasons, length, difficulty level, level of development, general location).

Responses

- - Mountain biking (at Red Deer's Mountain Bike Park). - XC Skiing at River Bend and Heritage Ranch - Nature walks at Gaetz Lake Sanctuary

- Hiking, Backcountry camping, backcountry fish and game guiding, off-highway vehicle trails. In winter it's cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. Level of development is low and because it's less well known, it's attracting people who are looking for experiences that don't involve crowds of people like in Jasper, Banff or Kananaskis.

- If portions of our trails are not being cleared during the winter then it would be nice to groom them for cross country skiing. Creating areas to park your vehicles to use certain portions. Again my experience has been within the community I am working in. I haven't been around other central alberta trails other than Red Deer. Red deer has a lot of great trails. Some paved some shale ans some through off road wooded areas. Also winter use for cross country skiing.

- Lake trail experiences - Gull Lake, Sylvan Lake, Buffalo Lake Agriculture trail experiences - through agricultural scenery Season - summer, or winter Activity types - cycling, walking, for winter could be cross country skiing Difficulty level - family friendly!

- More opportunities for winter recreation trails (x-country skiing/snowshoeing) would be great. Also in the West Country in general, having more formalized hiking trails with better marked trailheads and associated amenities (toilets, parking), would be great.

- My knowledge of the trail system is limited to The City of Red Deer, so I can't speak for the other communities, but Red Deer has an amazing mountain bike trail system (both formal and informal) coupled with well over 110km of paved

trails. The formal and informal mountain bike trails could be used for skills competitions as there is a variety of difficulty levels from the green runs to several black

- Rail trail Rocky to Nordegg. ATV destination regional trails. World class mountain bike trails. Nordic ski trails. The other opportunity is to capitalize on the paddling on the North Sask. river and should be considered as a "water trail". All difficulties of Each.

- Start with what we currently have like the events-Trail Runs (Bill Nielsen Trail Run). Scenic Natural Trails & Paved Trails around Lacombe. JJ Collett

- There are some great winter opportunities for x-country skiing and snowshoeing that could be enhanced throughout the region. Crimson Lake for example. Trail network could be expanded.

- We are really only able to cater to the self reliant recreational user that can provide their own amenities and follow trails on their own. Our maps are rudimentary and amenities such as parking, garbage and washroom facilities generally lacking. The Rail Trail has potential as a multi user spine but needs more work to complete. Not sure about hiking and bike trails. Snowmobiling can be good if snow conditions are adequate. Tourism activities are likely most attractive in the foothill, mountain areas where industry and agriculture are minimal or on the North Saskatchewan River.

- Water-based, 1/2 day to full day, medium level of difficulty, not too many or too long of portages

9.   Recognizing the desire to enhance trails tourism in the region beyond where it currently is, what types of signature trails tourism experiences do you think should be, but currently aren't, provided in the region to meet market expectations? Please be as specific as possible (e.g. activity types, seasons, length, difficulty level, level of development, general location).

Responses

- - Regional trail experiences from Red Deer to neighbouring municipalities (biking and walking).

- A hut-to-hut backcountry trail experience would be great in the Eastern slopes.

- Again I'm not sure about what central Alberta has to offer for trail tourism but is there any opportunity to have a motor vehicle trails that are for ATV's UTV's motor

cross etc. There are not a lot of areas around that I know of where people have access to use this equipment without having to go west. Example, I'm from the east coast and we had abandoned rail roads where the tract had been removed and was opened up as a trail system for all to use including offroad motor vehicles. Being able to access one community to the other. There were areas along the way designated for fire pits to cook a lunch or just a rest area.

- An indigenous tourism trail experience would be great... done in partnership with local First Nations. There is also opportunity to develop hut-to-hut backcountry hiking opportunities throughout the Eastern slopes.

- Family oriented hiking trails that are short, easy, and end up at significant natural features. There is also high demand for RV camping, and OHV camping, and nature based accommodation facilities and experiences, such as yurts.

- I'm not aware of any signature experiences currently being provided - so any experience should be provided

- Not sure

- Same as above.

- Trails that are better connected &/or loop. Right now many of our trails in the region are not connected - TCT

- A non-motorized relatively easy hiking and biking trail from The City of Red Deer that links Blackfalds and Lacombe (taking advantage of Barrett Lake and Lacombe Lake) all the way around Sylvan Lake.

- Water-based, shoulder season, not in west country snowmobile, connecting communities

10.   From your knowledge, are there any specific trails that you feel already are or have the potential to become signature trails that can motivate travel to the region?a. If yes, please identify the trail name(s) and location of the primary trailhead to the trail(s).b. Why do you consider this/these trail(s) to be/have the potential to become a Signature Trail(s)?

Responses

- - XC Skiing at River Bend and Heritage Ranch: extensive, attractive routes that are very well taken care of. Not a common asset in Calgary nor Edmonton.   - Nature walks at Gaetz Lake Sanctuary: a well regarded destination already   - Waskasoo Trail, particularly when/if it connects with regional neighbours - - Mountain biking

(at Red Deer's Mountain Bike Park): for MTB riders it offers a relatively difficult but respected course. To have its size and design within a municipality is not common.

- Hiking trails to siffleur falls, crescent falls because of mountain landscapes and waterfall features.
- No Past experience with TCT building a water route through Northwestern Ontario
- Rail Trail- Staging area on west end is Nordegg. East not completed though Saunders-Alexo has been identified as a Tourism node. Nothing else identified in vacant crown lands. There are also probably some historic horse trails that could be improved
- The Great Trail - Lacombe south through Blackfalds to Red Deer. Has great potential as it exists, has many users, is a beautiful location offset from major highways, but close to easy access. It could also connect to experiences in local communities like restauraunts (I know many people who bike from Red Deer to Lacombe with their family on a Saturday to go to Cilantro and Chive for lunch and then bike home!)
- The Rocky to Nordegg trail which is only partly constructed is a signature trail. It can link many other user specific trails. It also links Nordegg and Rocky to the west COuntry development nodes which are set up to cater to commercial developments such as destination RV campgrounds that are ATV friendly.
- The rail trail.
- The rail trail??
- Trails in Lacombe - Picnic along Elizabeth Lake The TCT by the Blindman Bridge JJ Collett
- Trans Canada is an obvious one currently going from Lacombe, through Blackfalds and onto Red Deer.

11. Thinking holistically about the supply of trails and the visitor experience (e.g. from trip planning to supporting services to on-trail amenities), what actions need to be taken to optimize the region's trails tourism potential and establish a network of signature trail experiences?

Responses

- Land Owners - need to work with the municipalities to complete the TCT Politicians support & understanding of all the recreation/economic & life benefits of trails

- - Increasing awareness that trails in Central AB offer something district from Banff/Canmore, Jasper. - Innovate with tech to heighten the experience of trails from someone's phone. Ex. the routes or the stories. Or, putting trails on google streetview
- A lot. There needs to be long term visioning and planning to identify areas and their competing uses, identification and mapping of existing "pathways" and decisions on what should go where, what is the priority (industry, environment, agriculture, recreation) as well as work on a long term funding program.
- get the province on side, infrastructure funding
- Tour examples are a big part of this. Having the on trail amenities and trip planning services are very important. Some trails need to be designated for specific use. Example trails for hiking, biking and roller bladeing, motorized or a combination of them all.
- Obtaining right of ways to provide better linkages between urban municipalities and parking at trail access locations, an app that locates the trail heads, location of amenities, and provides trail conditions
- Trail head mapping and markings so that they are easily located.
- Trip planning!
- A coordinated trails planning effort across the various jurisdictions. Also a decent investment in facility development (washrooms, parking, etc.) and signage.
- Sustainable funding for trail and staging area construction and maintenance is the number one item that is currently PREVENTING the ability to capitalize on trail based recreation.

12. What are the major issues, challenges, and barriers to optimizing the region's trails tourism potential?

Responses

- Perhaps awareness
- Acquiring land for use. Certain land use bylaws. Funding.
- Coordination of tourism operators, funding of trail building and maintenance, approval and designation of trails, competing uses for the same space (industry, agriculture, recreation, environmental protection public safety
- Funds available. Community buy-in. Access to land to build new trails.

- Lack of investment in basic infrastructure and operations (including visitor services like interpreters and maintenance) to date. Lack of smooth coordination between Government divisions and between provincial/municipal government, and stakeholders.

- Land Owners - need to work with the municipalities to complete the TCT Politicians & everyone elses lack of support & understanding of all the recreation/economic & life benefits of trails

- Resources (both financial and staffing), Council priorities, and public opposition especially with rural residents

- See previous question. No Sustainable funding for construction and Maintenance.

- Cost of maintaining trails and user facilities, such as washrooms, picnic areas, firepits, garbages, parking and staging areas. Working and engaging with indigenous communities is financially challenging because they require capacity funding to participate in any meaningful way.

- Funding, not a priority for top destinations in Alberta, if the province wants to double tourism spending by 2030 they need to contribute to the build of these experiences

13. What efforts are currently underway to attract visitors to the region's trails tourism experiences? In your opinion, have these efforts been successful?

Responses

- Bighorn country proposal generated a lot of polarized opinions but also increased awareness and interest about what the region offers recreationalists or tourists.

- Clearwater has been spearheading tourism and business forums. Clearwater County and the Province have been working on the Rail Trail. The Bighorn Backcountry Standing Committee has been working on recreational management. Grass roots organizations like the Bighorn Heritage ATV Society and Clearwater Trails Initiative have been doing volunteer and funded work.

- Events, Maps, signage, General Tourism Marketing - to some degree

- I am unaware of the current efforts.

- I think to some degree there is resistance among the community to actually attract more visitors to the area... that the west country is "their own secret"... I'm not sure if marketing has been successful, but we also lack the facilities required to make a

lot of our trails truly marketable as tourist destinations.

- I'm not sure

- You can attract all the people you want but we need to build a connected trail network to be successful.

- Little to none

14. What could be done to enhance the effectiveness of trails tourism marketing in the region?

Responses

- - Increasing awareness that trails in Central AB offer something district from Banff/Canmore, Jasper. - Innovate with tech to heighten the experience of trails from someone's phone. Ex. the routes or the stories. Or, putting trails on google streetview

- Enhance the experiences to attract more people from abroad.

- Get good trails built first!

- I'm not sure

- Not sure

- Promote Staycations in Central Alberta. Tell our trail stories Promote Picnics along the trails Promote the Benefits - Vitamin N (Nature)

- Social media, community guides or even news letters with utility Bills to remind residents of this specific attraction perhaps each season I myself have no idea what is offered unless the areas I currently reside promote these experiences. Whether it is for that specific municipal trails system or to also promote leaving the area and experiencing other areas.

- Build it first, then market it

- Understand the regions tourism market use or activities and users. Have a plan that sets goals and objectives that are measurable over time and space.

15. What organizations need to be collaborative partners in advancing the region's trails tourism potential?

Responses

- AB Govt, Municipalities and user stakeholders.

- CARTs BNTS All the Municipalities (including counties) & Tourism associations

- Central Alberta Regional Trails Society (CARTS), not sure of any others off the top of my head

- Government of Alberta (parks, public lands, Dept of tourism), municipalities, trail associations/recreational user groups, tourism operators, Indigenous peoples.

- Grassroots clubs and societies, governments, tourism operators, CAEP. CATA

- Municipalities and local towns, local businesses or business associations, First Nations and Metis groups, and local stewardship groups, but also environmental not-for profits who can apply for federal grants to build and maintain sustainable trails.

- Municipalities, tourism groups, stakeholder groups (maybe environmental/eco focused)

- Wild life federations, municipal collaboration, Alberta government, utility companies such as Atco, you could receive sponsorship for specific amenities or portions of the trail through advertising those companies. "This structure or potion of the trail was proudly sponsored by ...."

- Province, counties, towns, CARTS, Alberta Trails

16. Are you aware of any relevant provincial, regional or local initiatives that may have an impact on trails tourism in the region that we should be aware of? If so, how might these initiatives impact CATA efforts to optimize the region's trails tourism sector?

Responses

- -- Strava and other similar fitness app/communities may have good potential for trail tourism. Strava's use is growing and it has several well-used routes through Red Deer. -- The River Valley And Tributaries Plan outlines several regional trail routes outside of Red Deer that is recommended for development. These have the potential to have a positive impact on trail tourism. -- New modal devices. Kick sleds to electric scooters could be a future part of trail tourism in Central AB.

- A lot of planning documents in my municipality have policy to support trail development to connect our communities. Our new Intermunicipal Development Plans could also relay this policy statement

- Big Horn, but that's not happening now

- Bighorn Backcountry committee.

- Clearwater Trails Initiative has been exploring building trails where industry is active, as well as staging and camping areas. We hope to be able to actually designate trails in these areas. Clearwater County and AEP have been working on the Rail Trail which has potential to be a signature trail.

- Examples in the last question.

- No

- Subregional recreation management planning by Government of Alberta planning branch.

- Tourism nodes in the David Thompson Corridor, regional planning under Land Use Framework, recreation and watershed management planning, provincial 10 years tourism strategy, because these are all inter-related provincial planning initiatives that should be aligned with each other.

- Yes, Local Lacombe initiatives exist - Events, Brochures, Ads, Signage, Interactive Maps, geocaching, Picnic Pack Promos....

17. Are there any other important considerations you think we need to keep in mind or address as we work with the region to develop the Master Plan?

Responses

- Connectivity between areas will become more important. Industry can be a great partner, for example: utilizing logging roads as trails when they are not needed for industry use or putting trails on powerline right of ways. Long term visioning and planning is needed to coordinate all users and the environmental considerations as well as connectivity.

- Consult with as many First Nations and Metis groups as possible. The region is very sacred area and many indigenous peoples in Alberta will travel far distances to this area because there is less people and less development in comparison to many other places in the province. Their perspectives have historically been ignored or dismissed and we need to do better going forward.

- I think we covered it.

- Not sure will find out more detail on June 4

- Perhaps a brainstorming session, as I'm filling this survey out after the end of the workday & my brain is spent. I am curious as to why CATA choose to highlight Trail Tourism over other Tourism ideas.

- Take a look at the way Alberta's Iron Horse Trail is set up as a Part Nine Not for Profit Company (N.E. Muni-Corr Ltd.)...this type of model may be a way to consider operating our trail system

Photo Credit: City of Lacombe

3 STAGE 2 ENGAGEMENT – WHAT WE HEARD

3.1 Summary of Findings

<<To be completed following the stakeholder workshop in the new years. >>

3.2 Verbatim Input

The following section presents the verbatim input received through each engagement tactic applied in the stage 2 engagement process.

3.2.1 Government Staff Big Ideas Workshop

A full day workshop was help in Red Deer on November 19, 2019 with provincial and municipal staff who are responsible for the management of parks and trails on municipal and provincial lands in the region, provincial tourism staff and members of CATA. The purpose of Big Ideas workshop were to:

- Provide a project update
- Present the preliminary research and findings
- Educate attendees about trails tourism in general and trails tourism in Central Alberta
- Obtain feedback on the big ideas that are being considered in the plan.

Recognizing that the development of trails tourism can be greatly influenced by provincial and municipal parks, trails and land managers, the project determined that is was necessary to meet with these regulatory agencies to obtain early feedback on the feasibility and potential barriers to the big ideas. It was determined that this input would be invaluable in helping to shape the full draft priorities and actions for review with trails, tourism operators and other stakeholders in the region.

Big Ideas Workshop Participants

- Paul Radchenko, Economic Development, Trade & Tourism
- Sandi Stewart, City of Lacombe
- Lindsay Thompson, Red Deer County
- Jeff Heindel, Town of Blackfalds
- Don Livingston, Alberta Environment & Parks
- John Tchir, Alberta Environmental & Parks
- Graham Wylde, Alberta Environment & Parks
- Grant Santo, Alberta Environment & Parks
- Ashley Kalk, Economic Development, Trade & Tourism
- Cody Verbeek, Economic Development, Trade & Tourism
- Jennifer Hartigh, Town of Blackfalds
- Jerry Pratt, Clearwater County
- Angel Hand, Lacombe Tourism
- Stuart Fullarton, Town of Innisfail
- Jeff Hartling, Town of Rocky Mountain House
- Patti Simoneau, Olds / Olds Institute
- Michelle Zeggil, City of Red Deer
- Kimberly Fils-Aime, City of Red Deer
- Jolene Tejkl, City of Red Deer
- Brandon Maier, Lacombe County

Workshop

Following an introduction to the project and planning process, the consulting team introduced the idea and rationale for signature trails, examples of signature trail networks and provided important context on the supply of trails and trails tourism experiences in the region, trails tourism operators and marketing as well as market research and market expectations. With this context, the consulting team then presented the big ideas and big moves that are being considered in the plan. Following the introduction to each big idea, workshop participants worked as a group to discuss the idea and document their input via an "Idea Rating Sheet" (http://idearatingsheets.org/). Participants were asked to identify the extent to which they individually agreed with the idea and to identify the strengths and concerns / weaknesses of each idea.

Following the workshop, participants were provided with the presentation and encouraged to send any further input to the consulting team by December 5, 2019.

Input Received

1. Draft Outcomes

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
11 participants	3 participants	2 participants		

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Really value strengthen trails-based partnerships • Support "signature experiences first" and then look at enhancing others • It is important to link to other successful trail tourism activities (Banff, Jasper) • Amenities are vital – signage, washrooms • Signature trails need to support other tourism objectives and tourism as a whole • Trail based partnership between all stakeholders have to work. • Like the push over next 10 years to grow tourism.	• What will benchmarks / performance measures / milestones be? • What will success. • # and size of businesses associated with trails – might not happen. Can market support this growth? • Focus on local residents – not losing sight of people paying for these services. • Growing tourism responsibly. • Define "size". Do we mean number of employees? Growing businesses associated with trails & tourism. • 5 years is too short a time period to make progress on all outcomes. • Focus on one single signature experience / recreation user. • Sustainable funding for trial maintenance currently does not exist. • Need to include improving information services & sources on trails so visitors have consistent access to info. • # 1 priority improve trail quality and have consistency across jurisdiction. • Cautious on the resources in place to advance trails tourism • Investment behind the initiative is important.

2. Develop a Network of Sanctioned Market Ready Signature Trail Experiences: Rocky to Bighorn OHV Trail Experience

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
17 participants	2 participants	1 participant		

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
- OHV guided tour would be fantastic - There is a lot of room for expansion - Opportunity to address the random camping and trail use through proper design and mgmt. intent - Nordegg in a position to optimize their trail town offering services for this visitation - Connect to Jackfish & Hummingbird - Extend season for x-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling. - Connect to Rocky. - Expand camping / accommodations - Parking, bathrooms, wayfinding etc. - Work is already being done. Trail is already usable. - Positive environmental impact – reduce random camping. - Lots of historic sites to build out storytelling - Potential for cultural and indigenous activities - Ride in Ride out campgrounds – staying will be important for monetization – has to be staging. - Economic development - Utilizing under used infrastructure (e.g. AB Parks Campgrounds) - Existing mix of overnight accommodations (air BnB, hotel) - Iconic experience at Saunders trestle bridge - Potential for winter recreation	- Unguided would be currently difficult - Support needed to help visitors - Potential resistance from some non-motorized user groups plus ENGO's - Maintenance and infrastructure for motorized is higher – grooming (deadfalls, washouts) - Biggest potential pushback from eco-interest groups & environmentalists. Potential for sabotage and vandalism (how to address & curtail this) - Nordegg already have bylaws & trails for other - Maintenance / cost will need to be figured out

3. Develop a Network of Sanctioned Market Ready Signature Trail Experiences: Hut to Hut Backpacking Trail Experience

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
1 participant	11 participants	7 participants	1 participant	

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
- Caters to high skill level and seasonal diversification - Caters to market demand - Lack of AB based product is evident. - Not in Banff. - Caters to a different demographic "glamping" - Breathtaking scenery - Opportunity to work with external groups (private operators) - Potential to leverage $ for no-existent services (trail maintenance) - Potential as catalyst for creating regulatory tools (permitting, reservation system) - How is this monetized? – catered hut / lodge, guided experience? Staging out of Nordegg? - Potential for higher yield / international markets - Lower maintenance costs than OHV trails - Trappers cabins - Guiding companies - Transportation / shuttles - David Thompson Resort - Needs to be packaged - Campground development	- Infrastructure is not in place and is needed. - May be too adventure based and not capitalize on markets. - Seasonality restraint – is it worth the investment - Lack of services in Nordegg - Not a loop – hike in and out same trail - What comes first? Business support locally or trails. - Security of vehicles / theft - Spotty in winter - Need to be serviced - Potential to increase helicopter traffic - Potential to diminish existing camping experience - Current lack of trail permitting - Current lack of trail maintenance - Potential to diminish experience for locals. 60 day usage. How many businesses would benefit for 60 days? - Smaller loops - Cell service - Wayfinding - Maintenance - Economic spin offs.

4. Develop a Network of Sanctioned Market Ready Signature Trail Experiences: Heritage Cycle Touring Route

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
3 participants	6 participants	4 participants	4 participants	

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Should be promoted as a trail • Integrating trails system with Hazlett Lake • Link to natural area and water features • Connectivity is good and good offerings for a loop • Opportunity to tie into JJ Collette Natural Area NE of Lacombe • Appetite for bike rentals in some sports shop in Lacombe / Red Deer • Opportunity for bike & brew tours along TCT from Red Deer to Lacombe • Consider highways around Gull Lake	• 2A and other highways proposed at too busy. • Maybe better as series of small loops along a big trail • Could there be a combination or selection of ½ day touring routes? E.g. Red Deer to Lacombe, Sask River Crossing to Nordegg, Crimson Lake Area, Red Deer Urban • Weakest proposed "Big Idea" • Road bikes (skinny tires) and pedestrians don't mix • People who ride road bikes have a different expectations of what terrain & connections "should" be – and its not this • Connection should be off 32nd from Red Deer • Southern leg being 1 way is of concern • City of Red Deer has limitation of connecting to wider networks – regional cooperation • Perception that route would expose local landowners to rural crime • Not in my backyard perceptions

5. Enhance and Maintain the Quality of the Signature Trail

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
18 participants	2 participants			

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
- The experience has to be maintained to have repeat visitation and word of mouth promotion and positive reputation - Other considerations for development need to be made – which trail is the quick win and focus on that one. - Opportunity to develop partnerships and collaboration - Based on adopt-a-trail philosophy - Absolute necessity to have dedicated trail maintenance – grant / program for local employment? - Use existing resources for reporting (GOA call centres) - Agree with 4 actions - Buy in and engagement with locals - Directing visitors with confidence to trails from the Visitor Information Center	- Currently no funding for public lands or parks trail maintenance - Cell service to access portal - More bathrooms - Education - Establish baseline standards

6. Develop and Enhance Gateway Trailheads

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
13 participants	3 participants			

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Absolutely!! Visitors need to feel confident and safe starting the trail and where to go. • Also, a good gateway is readily sharable by users on social media. • Sites are already identified. • Creates a buzz for casual travelers. • Bike parking • Bike and repair station • Increased safety • Positive experiences • Enhanced promotion • Packaging • Enticement – what is the site / experience at the end • Provide info at entrance – elevation, length, what's at the end. • Consistent messaging and branding for signage • Addresses safety and risks	• Funding will be important. • Need buy-in from non-tourism focused ministries (e.g. Transportation & Infrastructure) • Current staging areas are unaesthetic, unpleasing (lack of toilets, garbage) • How will signage work with existing signage that municipalities already have invested in? • If we are left to maintain the amenities, we need to ensure they work with municipal specs and resources • Security for vehicles • Cohesiveness with local identity / branding • Don't want our local identity confused with signature trail • Enough parking • Need land managers approval • Funding from elected officials • What is the benefit to other communities, Blackfalds, Lacombe etc.

7. Develop and Enhance Gateway Trailheads

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
14 participants	4 participants			

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Safety • Confidence • Positive experience • Increased usage • Branding benefits for local communities • Enhanced longer experience • Opportunity to have consistent branding across all land bases • Brand certainty	• Must fit with local existing signage and identity • Need transition time to implement new signage • Brand has to tie into local community • Adopt existing sign standards – choose one of the existing developed standards. • Numerous content creators exist already. • Inconsistency across multiple jurisdictions

8. Provide the Right Mix of On-Trail Amenities & Accommodations

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
12 participants	7 participants			

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
- Has to match market – high yield versus low yield expectation - The correct staging areas become very important - Critical mass that a signature trail could create could help "rise all tides" - Amenities draw in participation from demographics that see lack of amenities as a barrier to entry - Opportunity for partnerships and private development of amenities - Rail trail example – Saunders node amenities - Branding - Education - Must be consistent on each of the 3 signature trails.	- Design and branding consistency - Clearly identify target audience - Lack of places to stay in Red Deer - Trail connections to hotels - Without amenity rentals, it is hard - Cost to build and maintain - Capital dollars are difficult to procure

9. Build Market Interest and Make it Easier to Plan Signature Trail Experiences

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
8 participants	7 participants	4 participants		

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Existing resource can be used to link in communities and businesses to the signature trails • Greater organization • Cohesive branding and marketing will lead to increased tourism • Utilize influencers and brand ambassadors to promote signature trails • Good – unique brand for each signature trail	• Who is funding this? – websites and apps are costly. • Who maintains? • No regional Central AB DMO • Unstable funding • Role of Travel AB? • More planning for this needed. • Must match marketing with the actual trail experience / expectations

10. Encourage and Support the Expansion of Local Signature Trail Based Businesses

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
11 participants	8 participants			

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Redevelopment of GOA campgrounds to unload and drive ATV's • Opportunity for CATA member communities to engage with industry • Educate businesses on how to be cyclist friendly – bike racks, storage • Creates jobs across many sub-sectors of the tourism industry (retail, recreation / entertainment, transportation, food / beverage, accommodation) • Business education needs to start with a tourism 101 • There also needs to be capacity skill building for entrepreneurs	• Current lack of OHV rental, servicing, shuttling • Length of season could be a disadvantage to new business

11. Create Welcoming Trail Towns

This big idea was presented but, due to time constraints, minimal discussion was held on this topic at the workshop. Though not all participants provided input, the input that was provided is presented below.

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
1 participant	6 participants			

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Could happen organically as signature trails gain popularity. Business will be drawn to associate themselves with it and capitalize.	• This all has to tie back into economic benefit for the community. • Would like to review the Trail Town info first.

12. Animate the Signature Trail Experience

This big idea was presented but, due to time constraints, minimal discussion was held on this topic at the workshop. Though not all participants provided input, the input that was provided is presented below.

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
6 participants	2 participants			

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses

• Aligns with experientialist / learner
• Hut to Hut is in a position to draw visitation off Highway 93 who are already visiting Jasper and Banff (high yield also)

13. Understand our Visitation and Ensure Visitation and Visitor Impacts are Actively Managed

This big idea was presented but, due to time constraints, minimal discussion was held on this topic at the workshop. Though not all participants provided input, the input that was provided is presented below.

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
5 participants				

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
	• 4 E's must be addressed, yes… but with the overall experience in mind.

14. Enhance Local Partnerships & Stewardship

This big idea was presented but, due to time constraints, minimal discussion was held on this topic at the workshop. Though not all participants provided input, the input that was provided is presented below.

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
5 participants				

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
• Advisory committee is very important to maintain consistency of any trail development and implementation	• Resourcing and time allocation for the committee.

15. Establish Sustainable Sources of Funding

This big idea was presented but, due to time constraints, minimal discussion was held on this topic at the workshop. Though not all participants provided input, the input that was provided is presented below.

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
4 participants				

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses

- Strength in numbers… opportunity for communities / towns / hamlets to leverage trails into funding support.

16. Celebrate the Benefits and Successes of our Signature Trails

This big idea was presented but, due to time constraints, minimal discussion was held on this topic at the workshop. Though not all participants provided input, the input that was provided is presented below.

Strong Agreement	Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement	Strong Disagreement
5 participants				

Strengths & Opportunities	Concerns / Weaknesses
None reported.	None reported.

3.2.2.1 Big Ideas Workshop Follow Up

Following the workshop, participants and invitees were encouraged to provide any further ideas, input or concerns. Participants were given until December 6, 2019 to provide additional input. Below is the input that was received from one individual:

- The trails inventory is excellent and will be very useful for the municipalities and the GOA

- Signature trails ideas are great but may be too ambitious for municipalities to achieve

- Hut to Hut location is completely in protected wilderness area on crown land so planning and development cannot be led by any municipality, CATA or DMO

- Consider how to link Rocky to Nordegg trail in to other parts of CATA region

- Provide CATA municipalities with recommendations on bike trail enhancements that their planning & rec people can get behind and implement, so that there is benefit from the study to all members – i.e. trail gateways

3.2.3 Stakeholder Conversation

A stakeholder conversation and open house was held on February 26, 2020 from 9:30-12:00 in Red Deer County. The purpose of the session was to present, answer questions and receive input on the draft strategy. The strategy was provided to participants on February 18, 2020 to enable a thorough review before the meeting. Thirty-five individuals from 29 different trails organizations, tourism operators, Destination Marketing Organizations, municipal government and provincial government organizations attended the session.

The strategy was presented to participants. Following the presentation, panel boards summarizing the major sections of the plan were available for comment. Though only three comments were received on the panels, through discussions, the participants expressed general support for the plan, the signature trails that were selected and the strategies and actions that were included.

Stakeholder Conversation Participant Organizations that RSVP'd

- Town of Blackfalds
- Lacombe County
- City of Red Deer
- Town of Rocky Mountain House
- Town of Sylvan Lake
- Alberta Economic Development, Trade & Tourism
- Alberta Environment & Parks
- Travel Alberta
- Alberta TrailNet
- Alberta Hiking Association
- Bill Nielsen Trail Society
- CAEP
- Central AB Trails Society
- Central AB Mountain Club
- City of Lacombe
- Clearwater County
- Clearwater Trails Initiative
- Cyclovia
- D&A Gardens
- Ellis Bird Farm
- Frontier Lodge

- Town of Innisfail
- JKL Trailrides
- Red Lodge Guest Ranch
- Red Deer Ramblers Hiking Club
- Skadi Wilderness Adventures
- Red Deer Association of Bicycle Commuting
- Rocky ATV Society
- HeLa Adventures

3.2.4 Written Submissions

One written submission was received from Pursuit Adventures. Input was documented directly in the report file and was considered in the revisions to the final strategy.

3.2.5 Online Stakeholder Survey

In addition to the stakeholder conversation open house, an online survey was made available to stakeholders on February 18, 2020 and was closed on March 6, 2020. Targeting stakeholders who could not attend the open house in person, the purpose of the survey was to gauge stakeholder support for the strategy and identify opportunities to enhance it.

In total, 18 survey responses were received. Nine of the survey submissions were fully completed and 9 were partially completed.
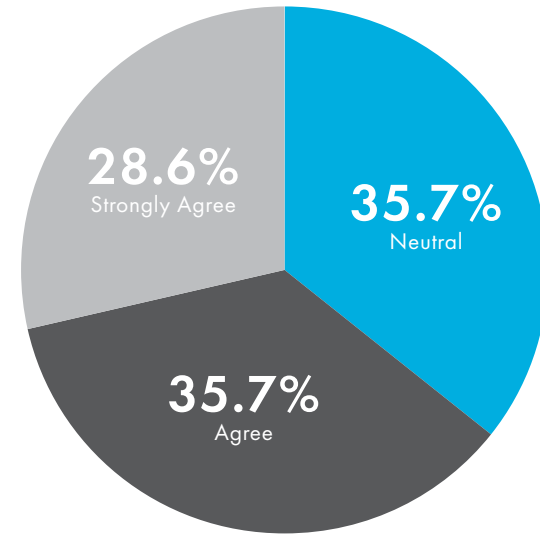
Input Received:

Response Statistics

Complete	**50%**
Partial	**50%**
Disqualified	**0%**

	Count	Percent
Complete	9	50%
Partial	9	50%
Disqualified	0	0%
Total	**18**	

1. The draft title of the strategy is "Our Path Forward: A Strategy to Grow Central Alberta's Trails-Based Visitor Economy". To what extent do you agree with the draft title?
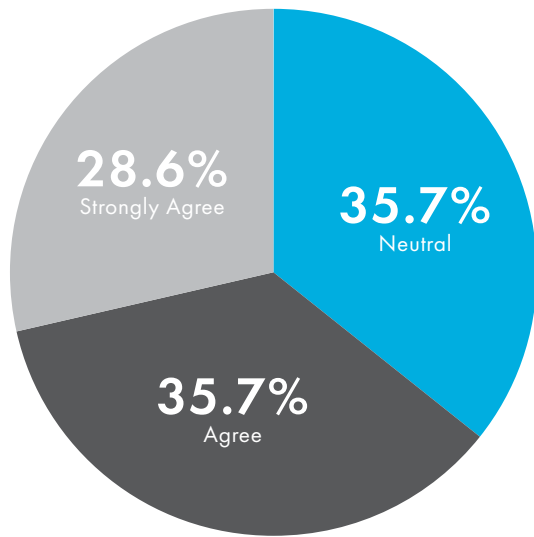

28.6% Strongly Agree
35.7% Neutral
35.7% Agree

	Count	Percent
Neutral	5	35.7%
Agree	5	35.7%
Strongly Agree	4	28.6%
Total	**14**	

2. If you do not agree the draft title, please tell us why. Please feel free to provide an alternative if you have one.

- I would focus on growth and the negative impacts that increasing trails may have to the environment and ecology of the area
- Where adventure begins.

3. The strategy proposes 9 desired outcomes. To what extent do you agree with the proposed outcomes?

28.6% Strongly Agree
35.7% Neutral
35.7% Agree

	Count	Percent
Disagree	1	10%
Neutral	4	40%
Agree	4	40%
Strongly Agree	1	10%
Total	**10**	

4. If you do not agree with the draft outcomes, please explain why.

- I wish you would have listed the outcomes as I didn't remember them.
- The outcomes on page 52 are nice motherhood statements. Hard to be against but not really moving things forward either.
- Missing:
  » Avoid the overuse and excessive commercialization found in the National Parks
  » Avoiding the negative impact of trails and trail users on the eco-system and wildlife populations (which should have priority over any economic objectives)
- I can't agree with all the outcomes as there is not enough focus on sustainability and responsible usership

5. The strategy identifies two focus areas for growing the trails-based visitor economy: 1) Developing a Network of Market-Ready Signature Trail Experiences and 2) Continuing to Grow the Benefits of Non-Signature Trails to the Trails Tourism Economy. To what extent do you agree with the proposed focus areas and their potential to enhance our trails economy?

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Responses
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count
Developing a Network of Market-Ready Signature Trail Experiences	0	0%	1	10.0%	1	10.0%	5	50.0%	3	30.0%	10
Continuing to Grow the Benefits of Non-Signature Trails to the Trails Tourism Economy	1	10.0%	0	0%	1	10.0%	3	30.0%	5	50.0%	10

6. If you do not agree with the proposed focus areas, please explain why.

- I believe that we need to connect the existing trails that we already have. Sometimes they go to nowhere.

- There's nothing wrong with the signature trails being proposed. If a local group was championing the backpacking trail proposal we would likely support them in their project.

  Our concerns remain that statements like "Achieving the full potential of our trails-based visitor economy requires us to focus our limited capacity. Going forward, we will focus our energy on the development of three signature trails..." [p.60] will have a strong negative impact on the grassroots work done by our industry to grow our destination for adventure travel and trail tourism. Those efforts are seeing increased visitations, especially from international markets not identified in this study.

  It's great to see "non-signature trails" included (the name needs to be changed to something positive) but it doesn't include most of the items the industry has been advocating for, and tried to bring up at the May 2019 presentation. We've had enough "consultations" but this could be a great opportunity for CATA to take a new approach and work collaboratively with the industry to address those issues.

- Single signature trails may help promote the area, however they will not generate much economic benefits in the western region as users may simply drive here to use the trail and then leave again. This means a big investment for trail network and basic back-country facilities, with limited revenue generation capabilities...

  What is needed are multiple shorter trails which meet certain standards, and which help make the area an alternative destination where visitors spend more time in order to experience a variety of trails and activities.

  A much larger number of people look for a variety of daily activities in more comfortable surroundings than multi-day treks with minimal creature comforts. It is great to offer both as we are talking different users, however, from an economic perspective the goal should be to attract visitors to stay in the area longer by offering more options.
  It will also be easier to attract fixed roof investment and other services / activities if visitors have sufficient reason to stay in the area longer (rather than a single multi-day trail requiring at best a one night stay before and after their tour).

- We should only focus on signature trails and not encourage random usage that appeals to those who wish to go off grid and off trail.

7. The strategy proposes to focus on creating three market-ready land based signature trail experiences. These include: 1) Continental Divide Hut to Hut Backpacking Experience, 2) Rocky Mountain House to Bighorn Backcountry Off-Highway Vehicle Experience, and 3) Central Alberta Heritage Cycle Touring Route. To what extent do you support a focus on these three trail experiences?

	Strongly Oppose		Oppose		Neutral		Support		Strongly Support		Responses
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count
Continental Divide Hut to Hut Backpacking Experience	0	%	0	%	1	10.0%	4	40.0%	5	50.0%	10
Rocky Mountain House to Bighorn Backcountry Off-Highway Vehicle Experience	1	10.0%	1	10.0%	3	30.0%	1	10.0%	4	40.0%	10
Central Alberta Heritage Cycle Touring Route	0	%	0	%	1	10.0%	5	50.0%	4	40.0%	10

8. If you do not support the proposed signature trail experiences, please explain why.

- I hope they all have outhouses at the start/end of the trails.
- The OHV project has great champions helping bring it forward. We have no involvement there but projects like this one should be strongly supported by CATA.

  Our concern with the other two projects is that they have little grassroots support and nobody looking at bringing them to market. I'd rather see the support go toward areas, like the OHV project, where we have individuals or operators willing to commit to do the work to bring a new product to market.

  While we believe that the hut to hut tour could be a great experience, we don't see this one as a priority. The proposed location accentuates the challenge of connecting Abraham Lake to Nordegg rather than BNP as a destination. The diversion of resources toward this project will constrain growth where we are already seeing success with day hikes. We would rather see the resources invested in the infrastructure of trails that already draw visitation to the area to bring them to a market or export-ready level.

Finally, these are not trail experiences but rather infrastructure projects. They should be referred to as "signature trails", not "signature trail experiences".

- In an era where we should make every effort to reduce fossil fuel use and pollution, promoting motorised recreation should not be a goal.
- As long as the Rocky to Bighorn trail stops in Nordegg, I can support it. Beyond that, you are encroaching on environmentally sensitive areas and biodoversity zones. I would also be cautious about hut to hut experiences without the resources to sustain garbage collection etc.

9. A number of strategies and actions are proposed to advance the development of a network of market-ready signature trail experiences. Are there any strategies or actions that have been proposed that you feel should NOT be included? Please identify them and briefly explain why.

- Encourage and support the expansion of trails based business. This one misses the mark, proposing the same thing we've seen proposed over and over since we started our business 10 years ago. Studies, workshops and toolkits are not working. We need to see direct support for industry lead projects. We need marketing efforts that are aligned between the industry and municipalities, something we mainly see from David Thompson Country at the moment where timelines are aligned with the availability of tours and booking windows.

    Everything else is fine. It doesn't help trail experience providers but at least the negative impact has been reduced.

- Clearly, actions and strategies for each proposed signature trail should be different, e.g. whereas having sporting / competitive events on a front country trail or high use trail in developed areas is acceptable, it should not be considered for more sensitive natural or back-country areas...

- You have yet to address environmental concerns about driving more and more people to the region without adequate services. You are creating a disaster.

- No

10. After reviewing the strategies and actions that are proposed to advance the network of market-ready signature trails, do you feel that any strategies or actions have been missed? If so, please identify them and briefly explain why.

- Connecting existing trails. Adding outhouses that are maintained.

- We should ask ourselves whether there is an operator willing to take these to market before we focus on those areas.

- Again, more emphasis on maintaining ecological integrity of natural areas, protection of wildlife, avoiding overuse AND avoiding attempts to attract activities which do not have to be carried out in natural or sensitive areas.

- As above. The focus needs to be on protecting and sustaining the natural beauty and the incredible pristine biodiversity we have in the area. If this isn't the foundation for what you propose, you will destroy everything people come here to experience.

- No — not after having learned the accepted definition of 'signature' trails.

- No

11. In general, to what extent do you agree with the strategies and actions that have been proposed to advance the network of signature trails?
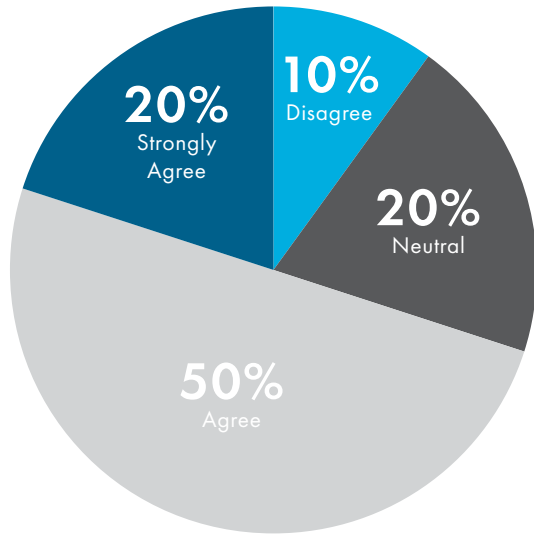
	Count	Percent
Disagree	1	10.0%
Neutral	2	20.0%
Agree	5	50.0%
Strongly Agree	2	20.0%
Total	**10**	

12. A number of actions are proposed in order to grow the positive benefits that come from the region's non-signature trails. Are there any actions that have been proposed that you feel should NOT be included? If so, please identify them and briefly explain why.

- "Maintain a consolidated region wide GIS based inventory of trails and essential trail attributes. Make those trails discoverable by visitors through a Central Alberta Trails website and trip planning tool." This might be true for those that identify as hikers but general visitors need curated lists rather than an overwhelming list of options. DMOs generally do not have the knowledge, experience and resources to maintain this type of database. It would be better for DMOs to focus on creating curated lists that link to operator websites and user-generated content.

- Again, there is no sustainability plan

13. After reviewing the strategies and actions that are proposed to grow the tourism benefits of non-signature trails, do you feel that any strategies or actions have been missed? If so, please identify them and briefly explain why.

- It's is a general list of things that should have been done as part of this study to align the priorities between CATA and the industry. Where the other strategies have concrete plans, this one calls for more consultation and general statements. Unfortunately, these discussions were outside of the scope for the May consultation…

  Hopefully CATA will take the time to work in collaboration with the industry to define and address these moving forward.
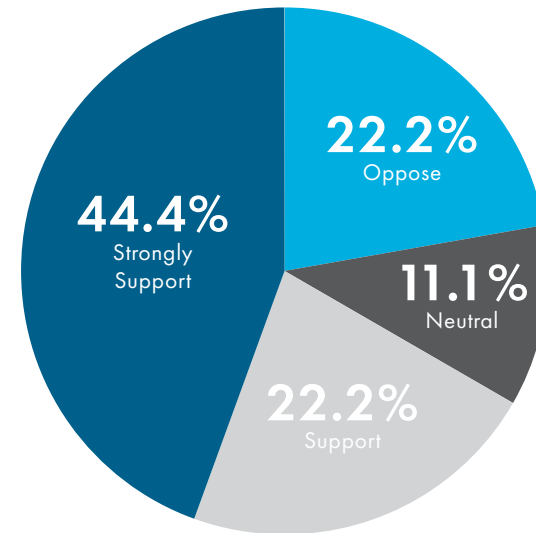
- There is no sustainability plan to protect the region

14. In general, to what extent do you agree with the actions that have been proposed to grow the tourism benefits of non-signature trails?
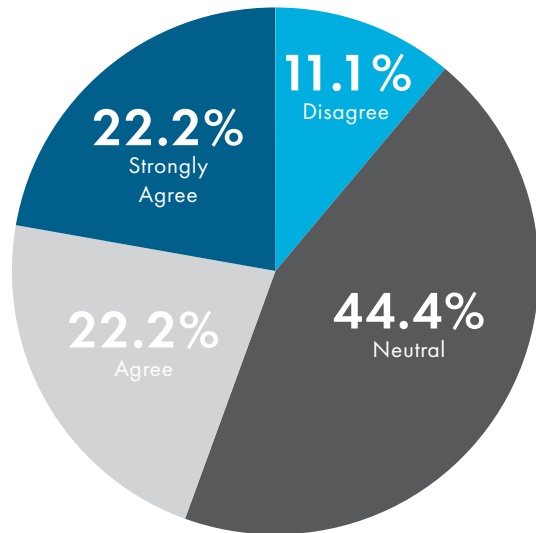
	Count	Percent
Disagree	1	11.1%
Neutral	4	44.4%
Agree	2	22.2%
Strongly Agree	2	22.2%
Total	**9**	

15. Overall, how supportive are you of the Draft Strategy Document as it is proposed?

	Count	Percent
Oppose	2	22.2%
Neutral	1	11.1%
Support	2	22.2%
Strongly Support	4	44.4%
Total	**9**	

16. Please share any other comments or input you might have on the draft strategy.

- An importance of connecting the already existed trails. Adding bathrooms that are maintained. Fixing trails that are flooded or have potholes.

- Since the DMP was released we've been promised a study that would help trail experience providers. We had high expectations but unfortunately the scope of this study doesn't align with our needs. It's a well-written proposal. It doesn't offer anything new but it brings together the information that we've already discussed many times but we understand that this is helpful for municipalities and governments.

  At the end of the day, it's as if you consulted hotel and campground operators on how to increase overnight visitations and then put forward a proposal to encourage people to sleep on friend's couches or to go random camping. They're not bad recommendations but they miss the mark. The proposed signature trails could be great for hotels, campgrounds, restaurants, gas stations, etc, but will do little to help established adventure tourism operators that offer trail experiences. The markets identified and the trail opportunities do not align with the areas we are seeing growth in. Focusing on an overnight backpacking trail limits the chances of a visitor spending time with multiple operators, spending the nights in a front country campground while taking part in a guided day hike, a horseback tour, an historical mine tour and a heli-sightseeing flight.

  A few more notes:

  On page 8, the comment about multi-night implies that only backpacking can provide a signature trail. That appears to be the message throughout the proposal. We disagree with this since many day hikes provide bucket list experiences that would definitely be interpreted as being a signature experience. Day hikes are a major part of overnight visitations as well.

  Experiences in all seasons are mentioned but it should be made clear that this is a summer-only proposal.

  Even though the word "experience" is used profusely, all recommendations and discussions are focused on infrastructure. It's a big challenge that needs to be addressed but we need to develop visitor experiences that go beyond infrastructures. We need to focus on the memorable moments along the trail that create a connection between people and places. Solving the trail quality,

  washroom and signage issues doesn't create those moments, it only removes the distractions that prevent them from being positive experiences.

  The trail definition is great in theory but does not align with the reality on the ground. We should strive to make it a reality but in the meantime we need to accept that some of the trails that drive international visitation and create amazing visitor experiences do not meet that definition. They should still be embraced and promoted while a plan to address the issues is developed.

  The market-ready scale used here is too focused on infrastructure. We need to look at the experience instead. It should at least be noted that the scale used here is specific only to self-guided experiences. There are multiple export-ready trail experiences in the region, unfortunately anything guided appears to have been excluded from this study.

  Overall the proposal leaves us mostly indifferent. There isn't really anything we would actively support since it doesn't align with our priorities or address the needs of experience providers. There isn't anything overly negative either. Our main concern is that this proposal will result in even less support for the grassroots work that is being done by operators. Those efforts are already delivering results and it's unfortunate to see that none of them have been included in this study.

- Would like to see equal effort / investment in non-signature trails as in signature trails for aforementioned reasons.
  From a funding point of view, I miss the user pays option.
  In the western area, establishment of a provincial park with user fees would greatly improve the ability to raise funds, have uniform regulations, reduce damage from uncontrolled activities, provide the necessary monitoring and enforcement and reduce conflict potential with other land uses such as resource industry.

  Also, in the Rocky Mountains Region, there should be more cooperation between Parks Canada and Provincial Land Management, with buffer zones, improved protection for migrating wildlife, trails which span both federal and provincial lands.

  Generally, based on feedback from our clients, more single day loop trails need to be developed in addition to the many "in and out" trails that exist.

- Strongly support the proposed hut to hut hiking trail as it would be a huge asset in Alberta. I travel the world to experience long distance hiking accommodation to accommodation. There is very little in Canada or North America to compare.

## 17. What statement below best describes the organization you represent?
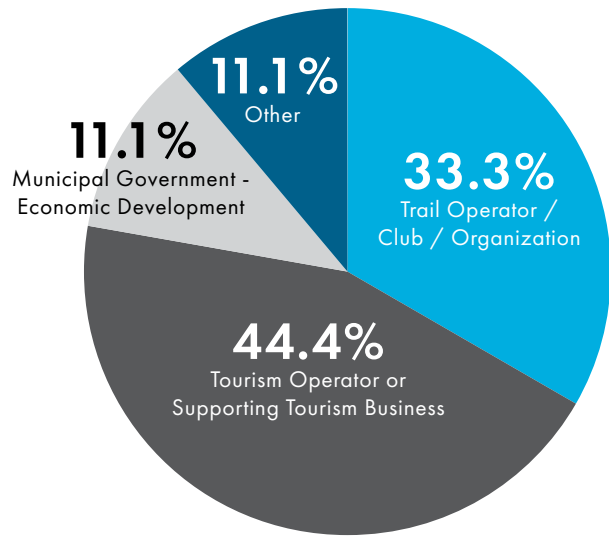
	Count	Percent
Trail Operator / Club / Organization	3	33.3%
Tourism Operator or Supporting Tourism Business	4	44.4%
Municipal Government - Economic Development	1	11.1%
Other	1	11.1%
Total	**9**	

18. Have you taken part in the engagement one of the previous engagement activities for the Trails Tourism Strategy? If yes, which activities? (Check all that apply)
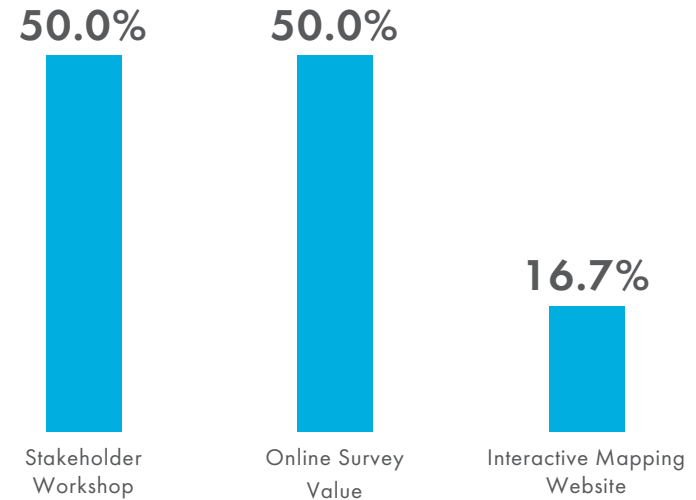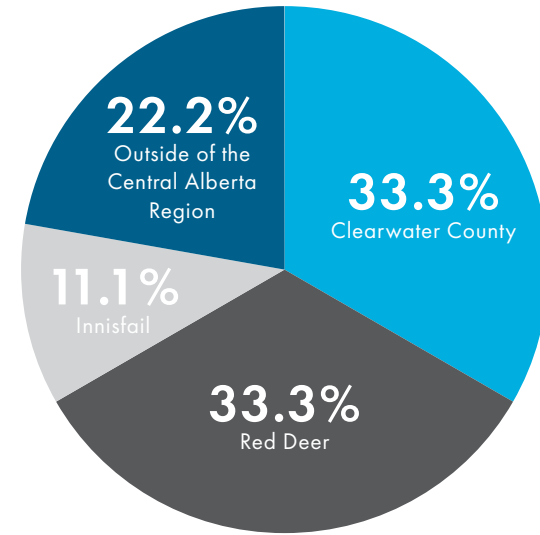

	Count	Percent
Stakeholder Workshop	3	50.0%
Online Survey	3	50.0%
Interactive Mapping Website	1	16.7%

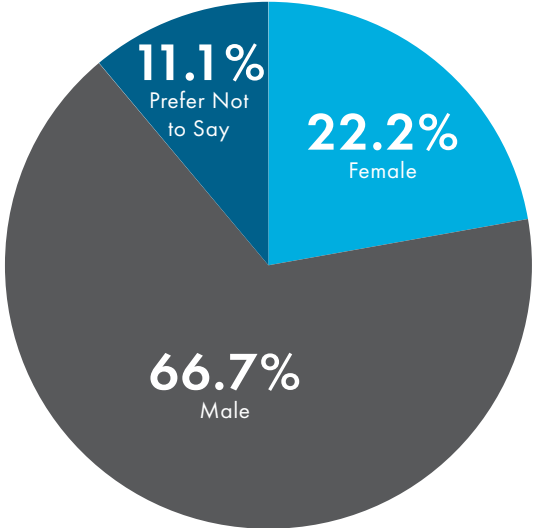## 19. Are you / did you attend the final workshop on February 26th, 2020?
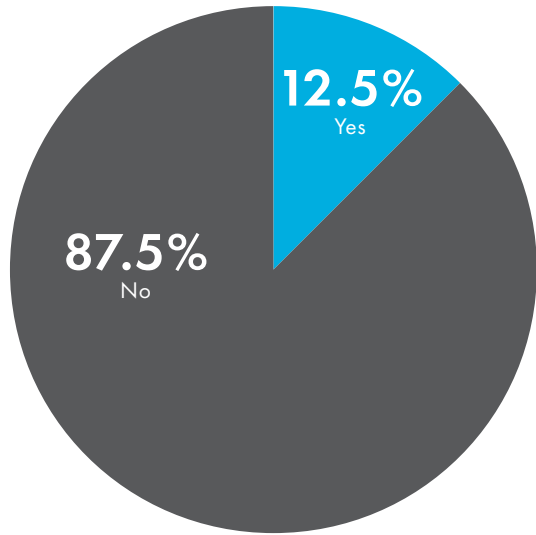
	Count	Percent
Yes	1	12.5%
No	7	87.5%
Total	**8**	

20.In what municipality do you reside?

	Count	Percent
Clearwater County	3	33.3%
Red Deer	3	33.3%
Innisfail	1	11.1%
Outside of the Central Alberta Region	2	22.2%
Total	**9**	

21.What gender do you most identify with?

	Count	Percent
Female	2	22.2%
Male	6	66.7%
Prefer Not to Say	1	11.1%
Total	**9**	

22. In what year were you born?

- 1962
- 1980
- 1967
- 1995
- 1958
- 1948
- 1989