



2205 Otter Point Road, Sooke, British Columbia, Canada V9Z 1J2  
Phone: (250) 642-1634 Fax: (250) 642-0541  
email: [info@sooke.ca](mailto:info@sooke.ca) website: [www.sooke.ca](http://www.sooke.ca)

---

Friday, February 7, 2025

## **Mayoral Remarks: Groundbreaking Ceremony Celebrates Little River Pedestrian Crossing Project**

Let us begin by acknowledging that we stand together on the unceded territory of the T'Sou-ke Nation. With me today are District Council members: Jeff Bateman, Al Beddows and Tony St.Pierre.

Today, we are breaking ground on the Little River Pedestrian Crossing and Multi-Use Trail Project, a critical piece of Sooke's active transportation network. This crossing and trail system will connect the Sunriver neighbourhood, Poirier Elementary School, Journey Middle School, and Sooke's town core, offering a safe and sustainable option for students, families, residents, and visitors to move through our community.

This route will provide an alternative to the current four-kilometer journey on Highway 14, transforming it into a 600-metre pedestrian-friendly one. That's shortening the distance by 85% while providing an opportunity for families to reap the benefits of time spent in nature.

Imagine the possibility. Just imagine the impact.

Rather than being stuck in traffic on Highway 14, you can be walking beneath a canopy of evergreens, breathing in the crisp, fresh air, and listening to the gentle rustle of leaves in the breeze.

Instead of the hum of engines and the glare of taillights, you'll hear birds calling from the trees and the soft trickle of water flowing through Little River.

Picture children laughing as they walk or bike to school, families strolling together on a weekend afternoon, and residents pausing along the way to take in the beauty of the natural landscape that makes Sooke so special.

This project builds on the vision laid out by the Parks and Trails Advisory Committee, including Kendall Arnold, John Boquist, James Bouthiller, Debbie Clarkson, Ross Reid and Mark Ziegler, whose dedication and forward-thinking leadership helped us get to this point.

I'd also like to recognize visionaries from the Juan de Fuca Community Trails Society – Sid Jorna, Murray Tomkins and Gus van Arenonk who are here today, and Terry Cristal who sends his regrets, for their work in identifying the need for this crossing and supporting its inclusion in the District's Parks and Trails Master Plan. Thank you for your advocacy and for laying the groundwork for this exciting moment.

Thank you to Chief Larry Underwood, David Planes and Billy Mobley who have spent time reviewing the project area and providing critical cultural and environmental guidance to bring us to today's milestone.

A special acknowledgment also goes to Emma Taylor, our Parks and Facilities Manager, who is a driving force behind the scenes coordinating this project. Emma, your tireless efforts, clear vision, and commitment to excellence have been truly masterful. I also want to recognize Laura Hooper, whose earlier work created the foundation for this project's success. Both of you have demonstrated what strong leadership can achieve.

This \$2.7 million project would not be possible without partnerships and funding support. I want to highlight the Government of Canada, whose \$1.3 million investment through the Active Transportation Fund has made this transformational project possible. Thank you to our former MP Randall Garrison, for his continued advocacy for Sooke and for championing projects that create meaningful impacts for our community.

Thank you as well to the Province of British Columbia, represented today by MLA Lajeunesse, for their \$500,000 investment in this project. Sincere gratitude as well to former MLA-Premier John Horgan as a steadfast ally, friend and Sooke Community Champion. With additional funding from Development Cost Charges and District reserves including the Casino Reserve Fund, we are proud to make this vision a reality.

I'd also like to recognize Sooke School District 62 as a valued partner in this initiative. Your collaboration ensures that this infrastructure will directly benefit the students and families of Poirier Elementary School and Journey Middle School, supporting safer routes to school and fostering a culture of active transportation.

To our children – This project was made possible because of you. Your voices matter, and you are heard. You are leading the way with your respect for the land and the wild creatures that call this place home. As stewards of our community, your care brings great hope and inspiration.

To our residents – Thank you for your letters of support, for attending meetings, and for standing with us in advocating for project funding. A special thank you to Mr. Peter Stokoe for your dedication to this project and your unwavering passion in helping us see it through.

To the media – Thank you for being here today, for sharing real stories, and for upholding the principles of accountable journalism.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the incredible work of our construction partners including ISL Engineering, Ramada who completed phase one and Regehr Contracting Limited who are leading this next phase. Your expertise and dedication will bring this vision to life, and we are so grateful to have you supporting our community.

When this project is completed in fall 2025, it will do more than connect neighbourhoods and schools. It will transform how people move through Sooke, create opportunities for active lifestyles, and reflect our shared values of sustainability, safety and through complementary interpretative signage, will also celebrate cultural history aligned with actions in delivering on the National Truth and Reconciliation calls for action in preserving Indigenous language and culture and fostering education.

So today, as we grab those shovels and break ground, we're celebrating more than just a construction milestone—we're celebrating what this project means for Sooke: connection, progress, and a brighter future.

Thank you all for being here to mark this incredible occasion. Let's get started!