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Final report released on rail corridor vision for Alberni Valley

Port Alberni - Harnessing the potential of the Alberni Valley rail corridor and finding ways to use it to support the local community and First Nations are top priorities ahead, concludes a final report on the Alberni Valley Rail Corridor Study.

The priorities were agreed to by the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, Tseshaht First Nation, Hupačasath First Nation, and the City of Port Alberni – who combined make up the Working Group that led the development of the study.

The study – funded by the Province of BC's Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure - began in June 2024. It included a review of the history of the rail line, assessment of the current conditions, and a look at the needs, opportunities, and challenges for rail activity in the area. The Island Corridor Foundation was also represented in the process of sharing information and participate in discussions.

The study identified potential opportunities for a range of uses, including low-speed freight rail use as a top priority for the study's participants. However, the summer 2025 Wesley Ridge wildfire at Cameron Lake damaged several rail trestle bridges, making re-instatement of passenger and freight rail service beyond Cameron Lake challenging in the near term.

Following the wildfire, the study's collaborative Working Group pivoted to focus on shorter-term opportunities. There is collective interest in further exploring the expansion of existing tourism rail services and new concepts.

There is also interest in continued collaboration between the Working Group members on how to best utilize the rail corridor.

"The Working Group has been meeting together for over 18 months to share ideas and perspectives on the future of this key infrastructure and it's rewarding to see how this open communication has led to a shared vision for the path ahead." said Daniel Sailland, Chief Administrative Officer. "While the wildfire changed the opportunities available in the short-term, the group remains in agreement that opportunities for the rail line should be pursued."

The wider Alberni Valley community was invited to share their input in the fall of 2024 about preferred uses and priorities for the rail infrastructure. The study team heard clearly that there is continued interest in seeing activity restored that would improve access to the community, reduce pressures on the highway, make travel safer, and reduce greenhouse gas impacts of truck traffic.

A video summarizing the study process and outcomes is now live on the project webpage (www.letsconnectacrd.ca/railstudy), along with the final report.

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