

# north shore news

## Province proposes trail turnstiles

### Push for safety gates follows other popular user-fee initiatives

[Andy Prest](#) / North Shore News

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Turnstiles like this one will soon be installed on all of the North Shore's mountain trails if the provincial government goes ahead with a plan aimed at generating revenue for forest upkeep and monitoring backcountry activity. Photo illustration Terry Peters

The North Shore's iconic mountain trails may soon be safer and more sustainable if the province goes ahead with a recently published plan to install "safety gates" throughout the trail system.

The proposal, outlined in a report obtained by the North Shore News from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, would see discreet, solar-powered turnstiles placed on every trail in the North Shore mountains.

All trail users — including mountain bikers, hikers, climbers and runners — would need to register for a "NatureCard" that they would then swipe any time they wished to pass through a gate. The user-friendly system would deduct a small fee right out of the user's bank account for every swipe.

"We're blazing a trail to a greener future," said a ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the preliminary nature of the plan. The move follows other wildly popular user-fee initiatives in the province such as the Port Mann Bridge toll and TransLink's Compass Card.

"It's time to face facts — those mountains aren't paying for themselves," the official said, adding that money collected would go towards improvements such as wider trails, plentiful cellphone towers and better-looking trees.

The initiative also could have other positive consequences, according to the report. Recent high-profile, violent altercations between hikers and mountain bikers on North Shore trails have spurred a call for more surveillance of users.

Data from the new turnstiles would be collected and monitored 24 hours a day with police getting real-time updates about exactly who is on the mountain in what location.

The RCMP's provincial gang unit has recently gotten involved in the dispute between the two user groups.

"We want to stop the violence before it escalates any further, and this will help us do that," said a police spokeswoman who did not want to be named. "As far as we're concerned these mountain bikers and hikers are no different than the other street gangs we monitor, except with much tighter, moisture-wicking clothing."

The exact location of each turnstile has yet to be determined but efforts will be made to hit every trail, including all the “secret trails” that mountain bikers are always going on and on about.

Some cyclists have expressed concerns about having immobile steel structures placed in the middle of challenging runs such as the Espresso trail on Mount Fromme but the ministry’s social media team has already come up with a Hit the ‘Stile in Style contest that will encourage riders to send in video of their most creative turnstile passes.

“They’re already riding a freaking Ewok village out there — #gnarly,” the ministry’s social media guru tweeted at the North Shore News. “What’s wrong with one more obstacle? I can’t wait to see what they’ll dream up to get their downhill bikes through our standard 11-bar, smooth-spin Rototronic 4000 turnstiles.”

The ministry also anticipates increased excitement in the North Shore’s many trail races such as the nearly 50-kilometre Knee Knacker, which will now include approximately 27 single-file turnstiles placed throughout the course.

“Any excitement above zero is already more excitement than your typical trail race,” the report stated.

There has already been some pushback to the proposal from user groups, particularly to the section of the plan that states that all human-controlled animals such as dogs and horses will also be required to register for NatureCards and to swipe them at each turnstile.

A provincial mediator was called in to address a skittish crowd during a protest held at a North Shore stable.

“Why the long faces?” he asked the assembled trail users.

The report concludes with a “Future Vision” section that floats the idea of a twin pipeline cutting straight across the North Shore mountains, one carrying bitumen and the other holding liquefied natural gas.

“All those pipeline workers would need to swipe every time they passed through a gate,” the ministry official explained. “We’d make a killing.”

Turnstiles are expected to be in place on every North Shore trail by the end of this summer but they will — following the lead of TransLink’s SeaBus gates — remain inactive for the next several years.

Once the turnstiles are fully up and running the province would naturally move on to the next phase of the project, a plebiscite.

The ministry envisions a public vote to approve an expansion of the program that would include, among several other improvements, coin-operated sliding doors in the middle of every run on the North Shore’s three ski hills.

The plebiscite is tentatively scheduled for five years from today, April 1, 2020.

— with files from Will Schuurman

**Please note: This story was written as a joke for April Fool's Day. It ran in the April 1 issue of the paper.**