

January 25, 1996

SUBJECT: ACCESSIBLE BEACH PATHWAY SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Board allocate up to \$ 5,000 from '95 Capital Access Funds to purchase equipment and supplies for an accessible beach pathway system for use by the general public and special event organizers at Vancouver beaches, and

THAT the Board provide information and materials about the PATHS system to event organizers to be used at parks and beaches, with installation to the satisfaction of the General Manager, and

THAT the Board investigate developing a partnership with the BC Paraplegic Association (BCPA) to ensure that event organizers have access to sufficient PATHS materials to meet their needs.

POLICY:

The Board shall assist all citizens with a disability to develop their full potential by modifying facilities to be accessible, and by advocating for accessibility to events within its jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND:

Mr. Keith David Benjamin, Architect, appeared before the Board at its meeting on October 16th, 1995. Mr. Benjamin discussed the accessible pathway developed for use at Spanish Banks Beach during Arts Umbrella's annual Sandcastle Competition, and potential applications of the system he calls "PATHS", (People Accessing Thru Hard Situations) at Vancouver beaches in the future.

The motion to receive the report as information was amended to include a request that staff report back to the Board by the end of November with suggestions and action plans for implementation.

The Chair also added that this temporary path system not be restricted just to event organizers but be used by the Park Board as well.

Mr. Benjamin reports that donations received to date meet the costs of the fence material used last summer. The \$ 600 he personally invested in customized u-pins, which are integral to the design, has yet to be recovered. The materials will be donated to the BCPA for multiple event use, and it is important that the pins are available as part of the package to loan or rent to event organizers.

The Board will allocate approximately \$ 100,000 from the 1995 Capital Plan for access improvements. Equipment and materials which must be purchased in order to implement this system will not exceed \$ 5,000.

DISCUSSION:

The linear pathway's basic system consists of plastic fencing, "U-pins" and a hammer and mallet, and a means to roll out the fencing material. One hundred fifty feet can be rolled out by two people and secured with pins in under 30 minutes, on average. Removal and storage procedures would take less time.

This access solution is temporary by design, and would be a potential problem to sand-cleaning equipment and the general public, and susceptible to damage by natural tidal action, if left unattended overnight and into the next day.

The intent is to install and remove the pathway system while guards are on duty at the beach. Special advanced permission will be required for major beach events and consecutive day usage. Installation will be to the subject to the satisfaction of the General Manager.

The basic system can be enhanced by adding sheets of plywood "rest areas" at regular intervals for larger events. The present four foot wide material will provide plenty of room for one-way wheelchair use. It will not be sufficient width for dual traffic flow, but the fencing is available in rolls seven feet wide.

The cost of outfitting each beach with sufficient fencing should be under \$ 2,000, and the purchase and treating of u-pins will cost an additional \$ 1,000, for a total of \$ 5,000. These expenditures can be accomodated within the Board's 1995 Capital Access budget for accessible equipment.

The missing link in the plan is the expertise which Mr. Benjamin and his team developed during the sandcastle event. He has proposed that a training video be created to demonstrate how the "PATHS" system can be used in a safe, effective and environmentally friendly fashion.

A video would inform staff, event organizers and others with an interest in creating access opportunities. It would also be necessary and possibly more cost-effective to document this information for staff and general public use at the two beaches.

It is premature to identify which beaches will have the materials, but those mentioned as possibilities include Kitsilano, English Bay, Locarno and Jericho beaches. Some form of sign-in/sign-out procedures must be developed to accomodate use by the public.

Alternative access methods were identified in the original report, and include a permanent ramp, at \$ 50,000 per site; hard plastic tiles, designed for existing pathways over rough terrain, at unknown cost; and surf chairs, at \$ 2,000 per chair. Of these methods, the surf chair is the most practical, yet its use is totally dependent on another person to push.

There are already surfchairs at English Bay and Jericho. Surf chairs are presently the sole means of access across the sand to the water at Vancouver's beaches.

Staff are familiar with the PATHS system and agree that it has potential for application at local beaches as well as for larger events, provided that volunteers or other human resources were available to install and remove the materials. Where Park Board staff are requested to perform any installation, fees may be charged to recover costs incurred.

In response to a request by staff, Mr. Benjamin has developed a one-page fact sheet on the PATHS system, which will be used by Park Board staff as a marketing tool with event organizers. Mr. Benjamin has advised that he is pursuing a use patent for the system, and would appreciate being named as the inventor supplier of the system in all correspondence using the term "PATHS".

The last stage in the continuum from large events, to local beach use, is individual use. At one dollar per square foot, the materials are affordable and light enough to be strapped on the back of a chair and used by an individual anywhere. This might include Board beaches, provided that it did not interfere with other beach activities.

CONCLUSION

It is appropriate that the Board further facilitate beach access for citizens using wheelchairs, scooters, strollers and other mobility devices. This pathway system provides improved access for citizens with a disability.

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