



October 13, 2015

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** IRONMAN 5i50 Vancouver Triathlon - Special Event

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## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve a request from IRONMAN, organizers of the IRONMAN 5i50 Vancouver Triathlon, for the following:

- A. Use of the Harbour Green Dock from 5:00am to 8:30am on Sunday, July 10, 2016, to accommodate the swim portion of the event;
- B. Use of the west side of Harbour Green Park from 9:00am on Friday, July 8, 2016 to 6:00pm on Sunday, July 10, 2016, to accommodate the swim/bike transition area of the event; and
- C. A road closure in Stanley Park from 5:30am to 10:30am on Sunday, July 10, 2016, to accommodate the cycling portion of the event.

## POLICY

Park Board approval is required for special events not included in the annual Calendar of Major Special Events and/or that are in variance with one or more Park Board by-laws.

The Vancouver Sports Strategy was approved by the Park Board on May 12, 2008. One of the strategic goals of this strategy involves hosting sports events of all types which support tourism, economic and sport development, and which provide social and community legacies.

## BACKGROUND

### Park Board Review

This special event proposal was originally presented to the Board on September 28, 2015. The event was referred to the October 21, 2015 meeting per the following motion:

*THAT the motion and report be referred to staff for a report back at the Park Board Committee meeting on October 21, 2015, in order to provide more clarity in the recommendation, particularly with respect to the route the triathlon will take.*

As per the Board's direction, staff undertook a comprehensive review of the route and overall event plans, and in consultation with event organizers:

- identified July 10<sup>th</sup> as the recommended date for the 2016 event;
- shifted race time 1 hour earlier to reduce disruptions/impacts to Park stakeholders; start time would be 6:00am (previously 7:00am), with Stanley Park road closures to be 5:30am to 10:30am (previously 6:30am to 11:30am);

- clarified park requirements for the swim portion of the event; use of the Harbour Green Dock from 5:00am to 8:30am on race day, and use of the west side of Harbour Green Park from 9:00am on Friday, July 8, 2016 to 6:00pm on Sunday, July 10, 2016;
- assessed the predicted flow of triathletes along selected points of the route; determined that the shared use of the Stanley Park seawall with other users is safe and appropriate, and that no closures are required.

### **IRONMAN Overview**

The iconic IRONMAN series of events is the largest participation sports platform in the world, engaging over 250,000 athletes. Since the inception of the IRONMAN brand in 1978, athletes have proven that anything is possible by crossing finish lines at the world's most challenging endurance races. Recognized for excellence through distinguished events, world-class athletes, and quality products, IRONMAN has grown from a single race to a global movement with more than 190 events across five unique brands (IRONMAN, IRONMAN 70.3, 5i50 Series, IRONGIRL and IRONKIDS) - 22 of these races are owned and operated in Canada.

In 2014, IRONMAN acquired the Subaru Vancouver Triathlon event with the objective of upgrading and enhancing the competition starting in 2016. In order to achieve this goal, the event would need to be rebranded and relocated from Spanish Banks to downtown Vancouver.

If approved, the new 2016 triathlon event will be positioned as the 5i50 Canadian Championships; as a destination rather than local/regional triathlon, the race is expected to attract approximately 2,500 participants from around the world, generating significant tourism and economic benefits, including:

- Roughly 10,000 visitors (each athlete brings 3 to 4 guests on average);
- Economic activity estimated at \$12 to 14 million;
- Over 7,000 hotel room nights;
- Repeat visitation (host cities have seen up to 80% of athletes return year after year);
- Destination brand building (over 22 countries represented).

Beyond the aforementioned benefits, the IRONMAN 5i50 Vancouver Triathlon will also leave lasting sports legacies for the City by providing local funding grants for triathlon development and the creation of a women's competition. This event is also unique in that it welcomes participation by both elite high-performance athletes, as well as competitive recreational athletes.

Relocating and delivering the 2016 event in downtown Vancouver is a complex undertaking requiring the collaboration of many different organizations/agencies. As a result, the organizers of the Vancouver race have worked closely over the past several months with the City of Vancouver, Park Board, the Sport Hosting Vancouver partnership and many other stakeholders including, Port Metro Vancouver, BC Pavilion Corporation, and the BC Ministry of Transportation.

As a result of this extensive collaboration and partner engagement, the event has achieved strong support from key local stakeholders, including Tourism Vancouver, the Vancouver Hotel Destination Association, UBC, Triathlon BC, and hundreds of local triathletes (news of a

potential IRONMAN event in Vancouver generated significant and positive social media activity after the Board meeting on September 28, 2016).

## DISCUSSION

### Vancouver Race Overview

The event is proposed for July 10, 2016, and would begin in Coal Harbour with a 1.5 kilometre swim. Athletes would then transition to the bike portion of the race, which would travel through Coal Harbour and up the Causeway before entering Stanley Park, where participants would complete 2.5 laps of Stanley Park, along with a short out and back section along Beach Avenue, before returning to the transition area in Coal Harbour (see Appendix A). The run portion of the event would utilize the seawall before finishing on the west side of the Vancouver Convention Centre.

To accommodate the new downtown Vancouver course, and specifically the swim and bike portions of the event, the organizers will require:

- Use of the Harbour Green Dock from 5:00am to 8:30am on Sunday, July 10, 2016, to accommodate the swim portion of the event;
- Use of the west side of Harbour Green Park from 9:00am on Friday, July 8, 2016 to 6:00pm on Sunday, July 10, 2016, to accommodate the swim/bike transition area; and
- A road closure in Stanley Park from 5:30am to 10:30am on Sunday, July 10, 2016 to accommodate the cycling portion of the event.

Over the past few months, the event organizers, the City of Vancouver's Sport Hosting Office, and FEST Committee (City Special Events Office staff, Park Board staff, Transportation Branch staff, VPD and VF&RS), as well as other key stakeholders (including Port Metro Vancouver, BC Pavilion Corporation and the BC Ministry of Transportation) have reviewed numerous route proposals and/or route revisions before finally endorsing the recommended event route. Many other route options were carefully considered and ultimately rejected because they did not meet critical criteria, including: lack of alignment with IRONMAN route requirements and/or safety standards; community impacts including prolonged traffic, egress and access impacts or restrictions; impacts on public transit; conflicts with planned and/or confirmed 2016 construction projects; and prohibitive cost implications to the organizer to deliver key components of the race in other locations (e.g. the swim portion of the event in a beach location or the bike course on the City's street network). The swim and bike routes recommended in this report were determined to best distribute and mitigate impacts to Vancouver's residents, visitors, and businesses, while ensuring the safety of event participants. A more detailed discussion regarding each component of the event is provided in the sections below.

### Swim Route

Subject to Board approval, Harbour Green Park would be the starting point for the event and the west side of the park would serve as the transition area between the swim and bike portions of the competition (see Appendix B). The Harbour Green Dock would be used as the launch point for the swim and offers an urban course value that is far superior to a beach location. Alternate sites were considered, including English Bay Beach and CRAB Park Beach, however neither was suitable/available. English Bay would require a large section of the beach to be closed to the public, result in increased logistical complexity, and inflate event expenses considerably. It would also negatively impact an area of the West End that already

hosts a number of large impact events including Celebration of Light and the Pride Parade & Festival. CRAB Park, on the other hand, was subject to a number of operational constraints including a very high concentration of commercial marine activity in the area and cruise ship operations at Canada Place every weekend between June and October. The morning arrival of cruise ships between 6:00am and 7:30am would coincide with the swim portion of the event, and as a result, the latter would interfere with ship manoeuvring and servicing alongside the east berth. In addition, Port Metro Vancouver was unable to approve a road closure along Waterfront Road during the event time as cruise ship tour buses require access to the cruise terminal. Access to this road was absolutely critical in order to connect athletes to the bike/run portions of the course.

Setup on the west side of Harbour Green Park would begin at 9:00am on Friday, July 8, 2016, with tear down complete by 6:00pm on Sunday, July 10, 2016. The east side of the park would be left open for public use (although a portion of the east side would be used for athlete staging very early Sunday morning). Athletes will be organized in waves on the grass area prior to escort onto the dock for their start time. The number of people on the dock would be limited to less than 200 per wave to ensure participant safety and to remain within the weight limits of the dock. Full use of the dock would be required from 5:00am to 8:30am on Sunday, July 10, 2016. Safety vessels would be moored (boats, kayaks, paddle boards, etc.) on the dock by 5:30am, and be deployed prior to the first wave of participants entering the water for warm up. Security will be positioned at the dock entrances to ensure only athletes and designated staff have access to the dock while athletes are in the water.

### **Bike Route**

The bike portion of the event would travel through Coal Harbour and up the Causeway, before entering Stanley Park. Athletes would then complete 2.5 laps of Stanley Park, along with a short out and back section along Beach Avenue, before returning to the transition area in Coal Harbour. Numerous bike route options were considered during the planning process, including City street only routes, combined City street/Stanley Park routes, and a Stanley Park only route. The first two approaches were rejected since they were cost prohibitive and generated the greatest disruptions/impacts to residents, visitors, and businesses. Executing the bike portion of triathlon events in landmark park locations, such as Stanley Park, is a common practice and consistent with the delivery approach of triathlons in other major urban markets such as New York (Central Park), Chicago (Grant Park) and Washington, DC (Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial). While the bike portion of the event will require a road closure in Stanley Park from 5:30am to 10:30am on Sunday, July 10, 2016, the park and its many attractions will remain open and accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and subject to confirmation, public transit.

### **Run Route**

The running portion of the race would take place primarily along the seawall, starting and ending in Coal Harbour, and looping around the park (see Appendix C). This iconic route would further showcase Stanley Park and provide for optimal participant experience.

After a comprehensive review, including a detailed assessment of the predicted flow of triathletes along selected points of the route, it was determined that that shared use of the seawall with other users is appropriate and no closures are required. The maximum number of athletes is projected to be 2,000 during the peak window between 8:30am and 10:30am (equivalent to 16 athletes per minute crossing at any one point along the seawall). To further ensure effective shared usage, IRONMAN would implement a comprehensive route

management plan featuring ample course marshals, event signage, and emergency services. It should also be noted that several other special events of a similar or larger scale successfully use the Stanley Park seawall each year without a closure. These events include the First Half, Half Marathon (2,250 participants), St. Patrick's Day 5k (2,200 participants), and Pride Run (2,000 participants), all of which have their participants starting at the same time. By comparison, IRONMAN's athletes will be dispersed over a five hour interval with staggered start times.

Subject to Park Board approval, staff will work with IRONMAN to ensure all required safety, security, traffic and waste management plans are in place. Engagement with Stanley Park stakeholders will also continue as organizers work to address impacts from the closure. Park Board staff recognize that road closures can disrupt the normal operations of park businesses, and as a result, will carefully consider all requests/feedback and work closely with the event organizer to re-open roads as quickly as possible. In 2015, there were 9 events that required road closures in Stanley Park, only 3 of which extended past 10:00am (see Appendix D).

After additional analysis, thorough review, and follow-up with other event delivery partners/agencies, it has been determined that the proposed event route is the only option which meets the needs and objectives of the organizer and the many event partners/agencies involved, including the City of Vancouver. Staff continue to believe that the requested event and route elements can be executed successfully, and will continue to collaborate with the organizer to ensure the event is delivered in accordance with all permit conditions.

## **SUMMARY**

IRONMAN is an industry leading active lifestyle organization producing world class athletic events. It is seeking to initiate a destination championship race in Vancouver which aligns with the Vancouver Sports Strategy, promotes healthy active living, enhances the vibrancy of our city, and generates important economic, sport development, and legacy benefits.

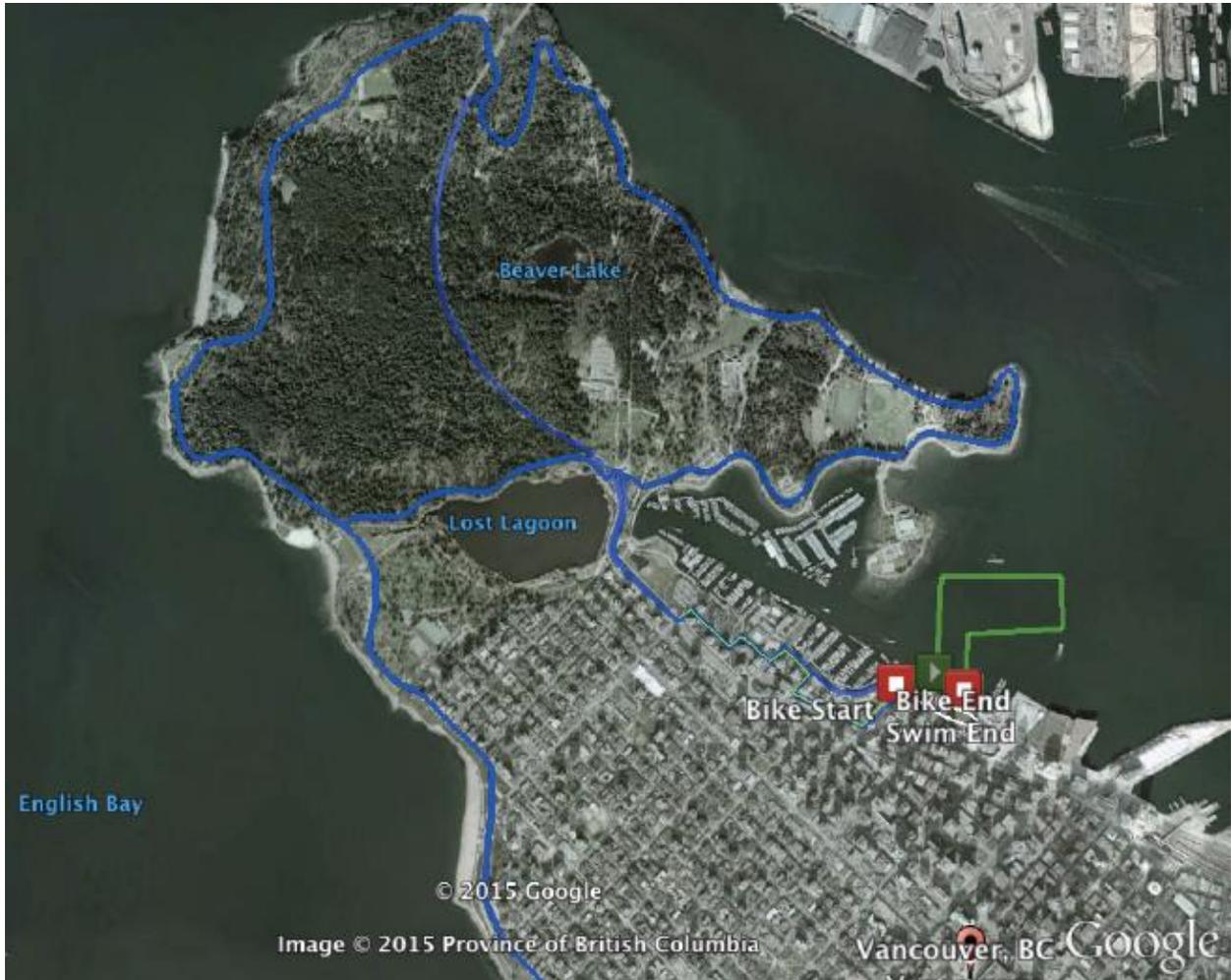
After a comprehensive review and assessment of the plans and route for this special event, staff recommend that the Board approve the request as outlined in this report.

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IRONMAN 5i50 Vancouver Triathlon - Proposed Event Route



IRONMAN 5i50 Vancouver Triathlon - Proposed Swim Location and Transition Zone



IRONMAN 5i50 Vancouver Triathlon - Proposed Run Route



### 2015 Road Closures in Stanley Park

The following recurring annual events required road closures in 2015:

March 14, 2015	St. Patrick's Day 5km Attendance - 2,000	9:30am to 10:30am
April 19, 2015	Vancouver Sun Run Attendance - 50,000	6:30am to 10:00am
May 3, 2015	BMO Vancouver Marathon Attendance - 17,500	6:30am to 10:30am
June 28, 2015	Scotia Bank ½ Marathon & 5km Attendance - 6,000	5:30am to 12:00noon
August 15, 2015	SeaWheeze Run & Festival Attendance - 15,000	Post 10:00pm
September 7, 2015	Vancouver Triathlon Attendance - 1,000	6:00am to 10:00am
September 12, 2015	RBC GranFondo Whistler Attendance - 4,000	3:00am to 10:00am
October 24, 2015	James Cunningham Seawall Race Attendance - 2,500	6:00am to 9:00am
October 25, 2015	Rock & Roll ½ Marathon & 10km Attendance - 15,000	6:00am to 11:30am