

MORFEE MOUNTAIN RIDGELINE TRAIL

A SMART STRATEGY
FOR FUNDRAISING



MORFEE MOUNTAIN | Photo: Fir & Lace Photography

When the Mackenzie Outdoor Route & Trail Association planned development of the Morfee Mountain Ridgeline Trail, it veered from the traditional route of seeking substantial funding right away. Instead, the team sought small grants to start, knowing it would help the project gain momentum and attract further financial support.

Opened in summer 2023, the 15-kilometre alpine trail winds towards dramatic vistas of the Northern Rockies before its exhilarating descent. Shorter ride options are available, with a one-kilometre track providing access to four kilometres of downhill trails. The network was developed for novice and experienced riders alike, and it also welcomes hikers in certain sections.



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PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

Mackenzie's local government, community, and the team at the Association, easily recognized an opportunity to attract the growing mountain biking community. However, developing a bike trail involves significant planning, as well as environmental impact and other assessments. These requirements put a great deal of responsibility on the Association's small volunteer team as they supported engagement efforts by regularly updating partners about the initiative, including First Nations groups, the District of Mackenzie, and its residents.

And, of course, there was the financial hurdle. Introducing a brand-new bike trail requires a significant investment, which can be challenging to solicit for a new project.

PROJECT APPROACH

The Association and their partners believed that advancing the project in small steps would generate interest and raise awareness of the benefits of building a bike trail, in turn attracting additional funding.

They were right—the initial funding of \$30,000, provided through the Province of B.C.'s Destination Development Catalyst Fund, was instrumental in enabling the group to conduct the required archaeological assessment and initiate the development of the downhill project and the Perimeter Trail (Azan Tunneh). Azan Tunneh offers an accessible route to the broader network of trails that connect with the Morfee Mountain Ridgeline. With the news of the project spreading, the team was able to access over \$400,000 from the Province of B.C.'s Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program, along with other funding. This successful collaboration between various partners highlights how flexible funding mechanisms and community partnerships can be critical in realizing tourism and infrastructure development initiatives.



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PROJECT RESULTS

While the Morfee Mountain Ridgeline Trail officially opened in the summer of 2023, mountain bikers arrived months before opening day—as soon as the trail was deemed safe to use. As word spread starting in late fall 2022, more visitors flocked to the trail, and to Mackenzie.

Several hundred people attended opening day, and since then, a substantial number of bikers have accessed the trail daily. While specific data confirming an increase in visitors is not yet available, the District of Mackenzie has experienced a boost in visitation as people gather at coffee shops, restaurants, and hotels—all so they can enjoy the trails.

