

'Circle route' promoted

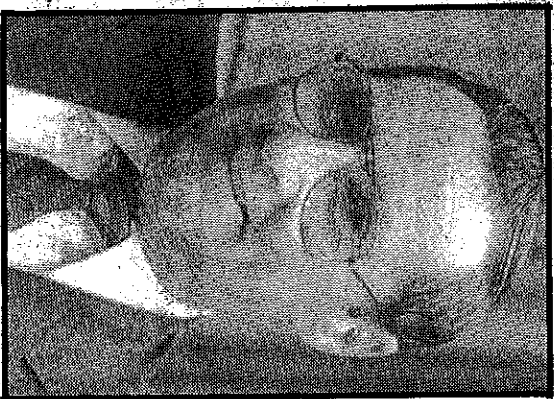
BY RUSS PARADICE

Construction of the proposed 'circle route' highway would help open up Strathcona Park's "tremendous natural resources" to tourists and residents alike, a transportation task force was told in Courtenay Tuesday.

Cumberland Mayor Bill Moncrief told the task force that one of the biggest benefits of the proposed highway link between Cumberland, Port Alberni and Lake Cowichan is that it would pass close to the southeast corner of the park.

"What a benefit a southern park access would be in achieving the recognition and degree of use of many other provincial parks," said Moncrief, citing the "strong growing interest" in outdoor recreation.

"Although Strathcona Park is the major provincial park on Vancouver Island, to the general



Mayor Bill Moncrief

public it is presently unfamiliar. It has suffered from neglect rather than being developed to its full recreational potential. The

public understands that (although) it's important to retain wilderness areas, it is also essential for the long-term survival and well-being of Strathcona Park to provide a modern alternate access to its tremendous recreation resources."

The proposed circle route highway, first mooted as far back as 1923 by the Cumberland board of trade, probably received more attention than any other transportation idea at the task force hearing. Of the eight submissions made to the task force, four of them cited the project as a top priority.

Presentations to the task force, chaired by Port Alberni Mayor Gillian Trummer, were made by the municipalities of Courtenay and Cumberland, the Cumberland Chamber of Commerce, the Comox Valley Economic Development Commission, the Minister

of State's business development task force and the B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association.

Lake Trail Road resident Chris Hillier and a commercial fisherman were the only individuals to address the task force, which is charged with coming up with a transportation plan for the Vancouver Island/Coast Region.

Hillier said most neighborhood residents are staunchly opposed to the possibility of Lake Trail Road being a connector between the new inland Island highway and downtown Courtenay. He said the use of Lake Trail Road as a connector would "destroy" the area's neighborhood feel.

Hillier said residents are mainly concerned about the danger increased traffic would pose to children walking back and forth to the two schools located on the road.

Steve Brown

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