Standing Committee Report
Committee of the Whole

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Director of Protective Services and Regional Fire Chief
Date: February 5, 2026

Subject: Regional Evacuation Route Planning Update

Objective: To receive an update of the Regional Evacuation Route Planning initiative outlining project milestones and summarizing key findings from the *"What We Heard"* engagement process.

Discussion:

Building on the foundational work of the Regional Evacuation Planning Framework (2022), the Regional Evacuation Route Planning project was initiated to strengthen emergency preparedness across the Central Okanagan by refining our comprehensive Evacuation Route Plan. The plan, refined by Acuere Consulting, addresses gaps identified during recent wildfire events and aims to enhance community safety by incorporating comprehensive route mapping and capacity analysis. Its development was also informed by public input on evacuation response behaviors and travel patterns.

Timeline and Deliverables:

The project began in October 2024 and was completed in November 2025. The work plan included:

- Project Initiation: Kick-off meeting, detailed field review, data collection
- Phase 1 - Information Gathering: Demographic analysis, evacuation route identification, scenario development
- Phase 2 - Analysis: Capacity evaluation, traffic modelling, risk assessment
- Phase 3 - Engagement: Public input, feedback sessions with technical partners and tabletop exercise
- Phase 4 - Reporting: Draft and final Regional Evacuation Route Plan, training and exercise support

Deliverables of this phase of work included:

- Preparation of regional evacuation route maps and spatial data (1. Map - RDCO TAZ Spatial Layer), identifying 250 zones across the region and individual zone maps (3. Map - Evacuation Route Zone Example).
- The technical plan outlining the process used by the consultant for analysis, and the attached “What We Heard”, which summarizes community engagement and feedback on the work completed (2. "What We Heard" Report).
- A tabletop demonstration with key regional parties to gather feedback.

- Newly generated evacuation maps that serve as an addendum to the existing Regional Evacuation Plan and are included as part of the RDCO Regional Evacuation Framework.

Next Steps:

Further to the recent Regional Board support for the 2026 UBCM – Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) Public Notification & Evacuation Route Planning Grant Application intake, improvements will build on the work to date to strengthen the Regional Emergency Management program and prepare communities to respond effectively to emergencies.

Background:

The rationale for undertaking this project was rooted in the increasing frequency and severity of emergencies in the Central Okanagan region. In recent years, the area has experienced several large-scale events, including wildfires and floods, that have required significant evacuations and placed considerable strain on local resources and infrastructure. These incidents highlighted the need for a coordinated and efficient evacuation strategy to protect public safety.

The Regional Emergency Management Program staff have advanced emergency preparedness recently with the modernization of Muster Centres, traffic management planning and development of supporting tools for emergency responders. Building on this foundation, traffic data was analyzed to establish evacuation zones and calculate average travel times to local muster centres. This analysis also assessed road system capacity, identifying routes with low capacity and long travel times. These areas have been flagged for future review and mitigation planning to improve evacuation efficiency.

Public engagement played an important role in informing the plan. A survey was conducted to gather input from Central Okanagan residents on evacuation preferences and potential challenges. The feedback collected was summarized in a “What We Heard” report and incorporated into the final plan to reflect evacuation behaviours and experiences.

To validate and refine the plan, a tabletop exercise was conducted with regional staff. This exercise provided an opportunity to review updated maps, test the evacuation strategy and identify any gaps or areas for improvement. Feedback from the exercise was used to finalize the plan.

Recommendation:

THAT the Committee of the Whole receives the Regional Evacuation Route Planning Update Report from the Director of Protective Services dated February 5, 2026, for information.

Respectfully submitted by: Alesi Zito-LaRose, Manager, Emergency Program

Report Approved by: Mike Walroth, Director of Protective Services and Regional Fire Chief

Approved for Agenda: Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

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Attachment(s):
1. Map RDCO TAZ Spatial Layer
2. "What We Heard" Report - Evacuation Route Planning
3. Map - Evacuation Route Zone Example
4. Presentation - Evacuation Route Planning Update