



To: Summit County Council
From: Dana Jones, District Director
Date: February 11, 2021
Re: Update on Snyderville Basin Trail Issues

BACKGROUND:

Beginning in October 2019, Summit County and Basin Recreation began convening a group of partner agencies to address issues of parking and trail congestion. In June 2020, after seeing a large increase in trail use volume due to COVID-19, Basin Recreation hosted a public forum called “The Future of Trails” to present strategies developed by this group of partners and ask for public input. Following the meeting in July 2020, Basin staff presented strategies to Summit County Council for improving trail access in the short term. County Council gave direction to implement parking restrictions and enforcement as soon as possible. Specifically, focus was placed on Sun Peak to mitigate parking congestion near Rob’s Trailhead and in Summit Park where trail parking and emergency egress routes overlapped. In addition, the County requested that a Multi-Disciplinary Group (MDG) be convened with planning, transportation, law enforcement, and other partner groups to continue working on a plan to mitigate congestion at trail access points.

The potential solutions below were compiled from the initial meetings with partner organizations in preparation for the Future of Trails forum. The public attendees were given a chance to comment in response to the proposed solutions and Basin staff prioritized them for presentation to Summit County Council. The strategies are listed by their short-term priority and annotations are added as a progress update.

1. Transportation – How do people get to trails while creating less traffic and parking congestion?

- i. Overflow parking
 - Identifying overflow parking areas and improving the wayfinding and identity signage is part of the Short-Term Access Improvement Plan. Improvement opportunities will be analyzed and prioritized by April 2021.
- ii. Enhanced transit
 - 3 meetings with Summit County Transportation and a transportation service contractor to discuss improvements that would better connect users to trailheads. Another collaborative meeting planned for this month with a pilot project planned for Spring 2021. County Transportation has been a contributor to the Multi-Disciplinary Group.

iii. Recreation shuttle

- This strategy still has high potential for resolving congestion issues in the long-term, but it scored lower for its short-term feasibility. Attention has been focused on enhancing existing transit capability with Summit County Transportation.

iv. Active transportation connections

- Like the recreation shuttle, this has potential for addressing congestion in the long-term, but high capital costs keep it low on the priority list for short-term fixes. However, providing secure bike parking at trailheads was identified as a quick, low cost enhancement that would allow more users to access trails without their car. Temporary bike racks were installed at two focus areas in Fall 2020 and funds were added to 2021 budget for permanent bike racks at major trailheads. One meeting was held with Summit County Transportation to discuss design guidelines and standards for bike parking. Racks will begin to be installed in Summer 2021.

2. Dispersal – How can users spread throughout the trail system to help reduce crowding?

i. Public user data/demand mapping

- Basin applied for and was awarded a \$75,000 grant to install 14 permanent trail counter devices at the most used trail access points. Installation was completed at 12 of the sites with 2 reserved for the Discovery trailhead still in progress. Data collection started in August 2020 and preliminary data will inform the prioritization in the short-term access plan. A full user demand study is planned for the long-term planning document that will follow.

ii. Time partitioning

- All of the dispersal strategies are being considered for the short-term access plan. Time-based regulations often go hand in hand with directional or segregated use.

iii. Segregated use

- A potential trail alignment for a new hiking-only trail has been identified and is in the planning stages for construction in 2021.
- The new Discovery Trail system, to be opened in 2021 was built with a variety of single-user trails. Adding mileage of hiking-only, biking-only, and multi-use trail to the system with associated parking. This will be the standard practice going forward to increase single user-type trails.

iv. Directional use

- Our portable trail counter system was used in 2020 to measure demand at high usage points in the Glenwild area. This data will be used to target directional and time partitioning efforts when and where they are most needed in 2021. Other areas will be measured with the permanent trail counters and considered for regulatory change in the access planning process.

3. Education/enforcement – How can we better share trails and create positive user interactions?

- i. Courtesy campaign
 - Efforts in this area have been taken on as individual projects by trails staff including a signage project by Dave Paskoski in 2020.
 - The education and enforcement staff person recently hired has taken the lead on several outreach programs that will be implemented in 2021. This includes continued parking education materials, trail etiquette outreach, and a dog etiquette outreach program.
- ii. Trail ambassadors
 - An existing Basin program that will get increased attention in 2021 as a complement to the education and enforcement program.
- iii. Enforcement officer
 - This was initially scored lower for the increased operational and capital costs, but it was prioritized for immediate implementation following the work session with Summit County Council in July 2020.
 - A seasonal enforcement officer was hired in September 2020 while funding was added to the 2021 budget for a full-time position.
 - A parking management software was purchased to track violations and the services of an Administrative Law Judge were secured to allow a venue for violations to be contested.
 - The full-time, permanent enforcement staff position was hired in January 2021 and additional positions will be added as we assess the effectiveness of the program. The added staff capacity will give all education efforts increased attention.
- iv. Paid permit parking
 - Basin has met with multiple parking management services beginning in 2019.
 - The parking enforcement management software that was purchased in conjunction with hiring an enforcement officer can also be used for paid permit parking.
 - Basin has also connected with several companies that provide smart parking sensor networks to track real time parking capacity at trailheads.

As a follow up to the July 2020 work session with County Council, the Multi-Disciplinary Group (MDG) met once monthly through the Fall and set a schedule to create a document that proposed short-term trail access improvements. The scope of this plan will be one year and it will be followed up with a plan that focuses on long-term improvements on the scale of 3-5 years. Towards this goal the MDG is meeting twice each month to complete the short-term document by the end of March. Below is a summary of the introductory section of the document that has been drafted up to this point. This document is intended to guide the improvement of trail experiences in the Snyderville Basin Special Recreation District and balance those services with associated impacts. It is meant to complement the SBSRD Trails Master Plan and the SBSRD Recreational Open Space and Management Plan Guidelines documents to inform the improvement of the existing trail access network within the next year.

Guiding Principles

These are the values that will be taken into consideration for the access planning process. These are based on ideas from SBSRD's planning documents and on ideas generated through discussion with the Multi-Disciplinary Group (MDG). They are divided into three categories: Social, Economic, and Environmental. These categories, borrowed from sustainability planning frameworks, allow for a broad consideration of the long-term viability of a system.

Social

Safe – well designed and regulated to avoid conflict between users

- Trails should minimize conflicts and collision through regulations and industry best practices for design.
- Access points should be open, visible, and take Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) into consideration.
- Signs should provide clear and consistent wayfinding.

Equitable – available to a variety of user types with a range of physical abilities

- Access points should be numerous and connected to residential areas.
- Multiple modes of travel should be accommodated to access trailheads. They should be as close as possible to transportation networks while also allowing a quick transition from street to trail.
- The trail system should provide recreational opportunities for a diversity of physical ability and skill levels.
- While not always possible, a diversity of trail recreation opportunity types should be available and well-distributed throughout the system.
- Signage should be clear, concise, and preference visual communication over specific languages.

Enjoyable – a diversity of experiences ranging from excitement to solitude are accommodated

- Trails should cater to a variety of recreation types and desired outdoor recreation experiences.
- Acknowledge that there is a variety of ways to find value in outdoor recreation. Fun, excitement, challenge, solitude, escape, and connection to nature are experiences that should be considered.

Economic

Durable – designed to industry standards for low maintenance

- Trails should be designed from the outset to minimize the need for maintenance. They should be aligned with the contours of the landscape and shaped to shed water readily.
- Design guidelines should be up to date and align with industry standards for trail construction.

Well-supported – funded from diverse and reliable sources

- Support for the construction and maintenance of trails should come from as close as possible to users and those who benefit from them.
- Public/private partnerships should create mutually beneficial relationships and engage organizations that depend on trail tourism.

Viable – supportive of local economy and responsive to community needs

- Understand the needs of the residents that financially support the trails system through taxes and vote for bonds to support trails and open space.
- Analyze and consider the value of recreation tourism to the local economy.

Environmental

Low impact - limited disturbance to sensitive wildlife areas, wet areas, and steep slopes.

- Trails should be aligned to minimize conflict with ecological values including wildlife, vegetation, soil, and water conservation. Zones that have high conservation value should be designated early on in the planning stage.

- Avoid steep slopes that require displacing larger soil volumes and create a higher likelihood of sediment being transported into waterways. Trails in both wet areas and on steep slopes are less stable and require more maintenance.

Purposeful – **created with a specific function in mind and laid out to use space efficiently.**

- Trails should guide users away from sensitive resources and towards desirable destinations to prevent the creation of demand trails.
- ‘Sensitive areas’ to avoid can include populations of invasive plants.

Appropriate – **responsive to environmental context**

- The aesthetic of a trail should match its context and remote backcountry experiences should be preserved where possible.
- The minimal infrastructure that is required to support recreation should be built along trails and in open space.

Plan objectives – implementable aspects of the planning process that connect with the guiding principles.

- Plan to create or add capacity to trailheads that accommodates multiple modes of transportation.
- Identify sustainable and equitable funding sources.
- Identify partnerships/collaboration opportunities
- Balance the provision of recreational services with parking and traffic congestion.
- Identify opportunities to preserve characteristics of solitude for backcountry trail experiences where capacity allows.
- Develop framework to match demand for recreation with recreational supply. Identify metrics to guide decision making.
- Analyze and accommodate demands for dual season recreational use.

Timeline:

Jan 8 – Multi-Disciplinary Group (MDG) reviews outline of short-term access improvement planning document

Jan 22 – MDG reviews ‘Intro, Vision, Background, Goals’ section

Feb 5 – MDG reviews draft ‘Existing Conditions’ section draft

Feb 11 – Basin staff will present an update to SBSRD Board

Feb 19 – MDG reviews ‘Proposed Improvements’ section draft

Mar 5 – draft outline future long-term study, implementation plan, review by MDG

Mar 11 - Basin staff will present an update on the planning process to SBSRD Board

Mar 17 – Basin staff will present an update to the Summit County Council

Mar 19 – Presentation and final comments on full draft document. MDG

Mar 31 – Finalize short term document. Distribute to MDG, County Council