

Recreation Trails Strategy Community Survey March 2021 Results Summary



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Introduction

This report summarizes the results of the online survey released to the community in March 2021 to gather input to inform the project planning phase of the Recreation Trails Strategy (RTS) project. The survey captured input from 799 respondents, which represents a response rate of 6% based on Whistler's permanent population.

Thanks to all 799 people who made time for this survey which took an average of 12 minutes to complete. It presented a lot of information that needed to be reviewed; however, respondents were informed of the survey sections (listed below) and topics and invited to skip sections or questions that were not of interest to them.

1. About you (demographic questions)
2. Trail-related topics (importance and identification questions)
3. Proposed 2021 trail projects (identification of challenges and mitigation actions)
4. Draft vision and objectives for Whistler trails (level of agreement and identification of changes)
5. Survey feedback

RTS Project Overview

The RMOW is leading the development of the RTS that will provide high-level direction related to off-road trails and trail-related amenity development, improvement, access, funding and management. As a higher-level strategy, the RTS will not specify the number, location, or types of trails, which will be the focus for a future and more detailed Trails Master Plan. The project is being undertaken in two phases as outlined below.

RTS Project Planning (January to May 2021): The project planning phase included the March survey, establishing the project parameters, and ultimately developing a request for proposal (RFP) to seek consultants to assist with the RTS development.

RTS Development (2022): The RTS development phases and deliverables will be determined through the project planning phase and finalized with assistance from the project consultants. It is expected that consultation with the broader community will continue. Further, it is expected that engagement will also involve stakeholders, community partners and representatives of the Squamish First Nation and Lil'wat First Nation, ensuring their interests, objectives and concerns are considered and reflected in the plan as much as possible.

Please visit whistler.ca/rts for more information about the RTS project, including the objectives, scope, background and related guiding documents.

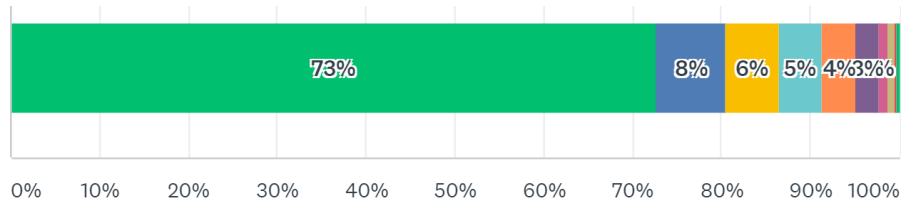
Survey Results

This section summarizes the input gathered through the online survey released publicly in March 2021.

Section 1: Demographics

Q1: Where do you live?

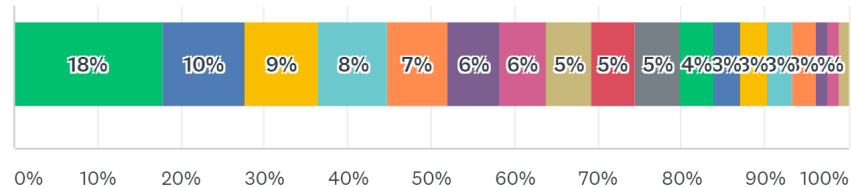
Answered: 799 / Skipped: 0



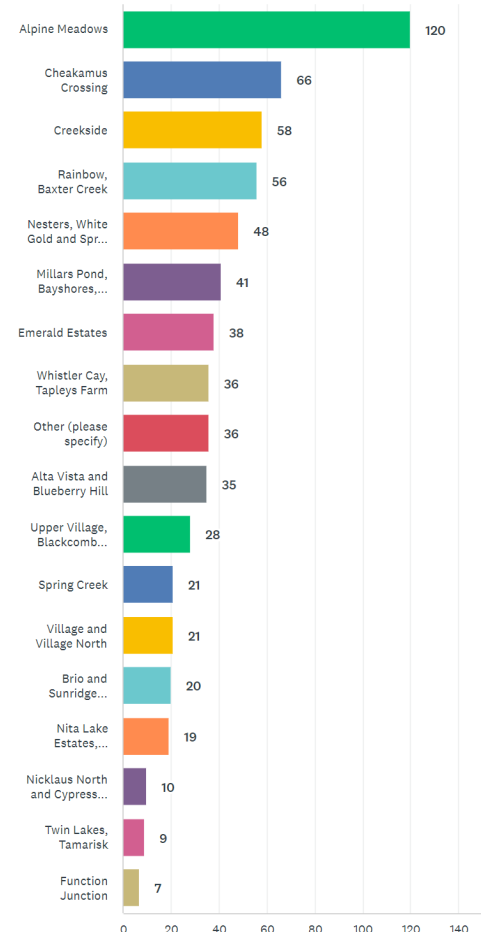
- Whistler full-time – permanently, year-round
- Whistler part-time – I own a second home in Whistler
- Vancouver/Lower mainland
- Squamish area
- Pemberton/Mount Currie area
- Predominantly in Whistler and part of the year elsewhere
- Elsewhere in BC
- Whistler full-time – for just a season or two
- USA
- Elsewhere in Canada
- Other country (please specify):

Q2: In which Whistler neighbourhood is your home or second home?

Answered: 669 / Skipped: 130



- Alpine Meadows
- Cheakamus Crossing
- Creekside
- Rainbow, Baxter Creek
- Nesters, White Gold and Spruce Grove
- Millars Pond, Bayshores, Kadenwood
- Emerald Estates
- Whistler Cay, Tapleys Farm
- Other (please specify)
- Alta Vista and Blueberry Hill
- Upper Village, Blackcomb Benchlands
- Spring Creek
- Village and Village North
- Brio and Sunridge Plateau
- Nita Lake Estates, Stonebridge and Westside/Alta Lake Road
- Nicklaus North and Cypress Place
- Twin Lakes, Tamarisk
- Function Junction

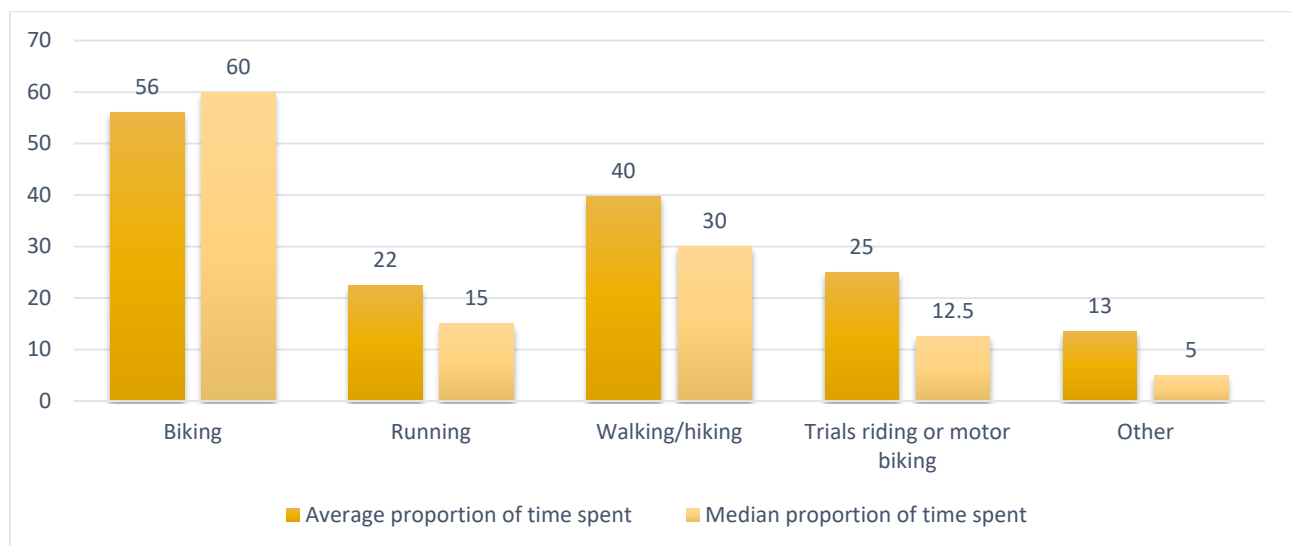


Q3: Relatively how much time do you spend doing each activity while on Whistler's off-road trails in the summer?

Please allocate 100 points between the activities to indicate the proportion of time you spend doing each. NOTE: Only numerical data that adds up to 100 can be entered. Do not enter any letters or symbols (e.g., %).

Answered: 762 / Skipped: 37

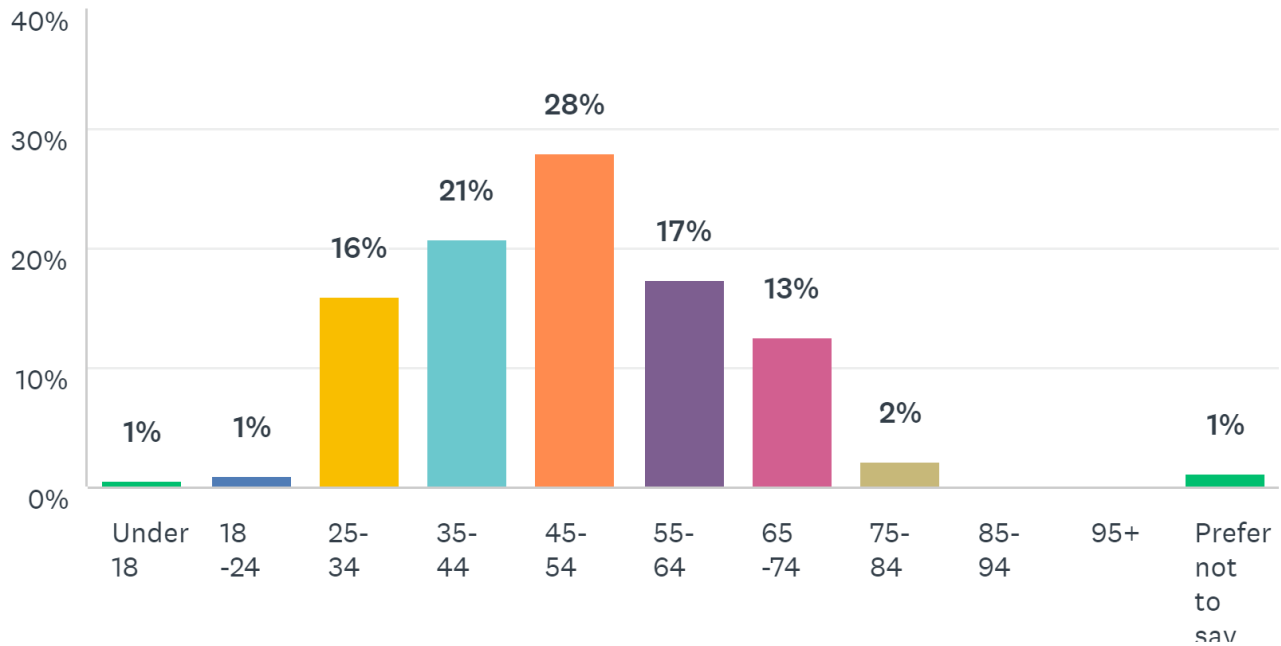
The chart below presents the average and median score out of 100 that respondents used to estimate the proportion of time they spend doing each activity on Whistler's off-road trails. Biking received 681 responses/scores with an average score of 56, meaning that for those who indicated they use off-road trails for biking, on average biking represents 56% of their time spent on off-road trails. The median score was 60. Walking/hiking on off-road trails is the next most popular in terms of time spent with an average score of 40 and median of 30.



	Biking	Running	Walking/hiking	Trials riding or motor biking	Other
Count of responses	681	300	664	136	71

Q4: Which range below includes your age?

Answered: 767 / Skipped: 32



Section 2: Trail-related topics

The questions in this section presented 12 known trail-related topics (including a just-for-fun code name for and a description of each) in order to understand respondents' views of the relative importance of each topic.

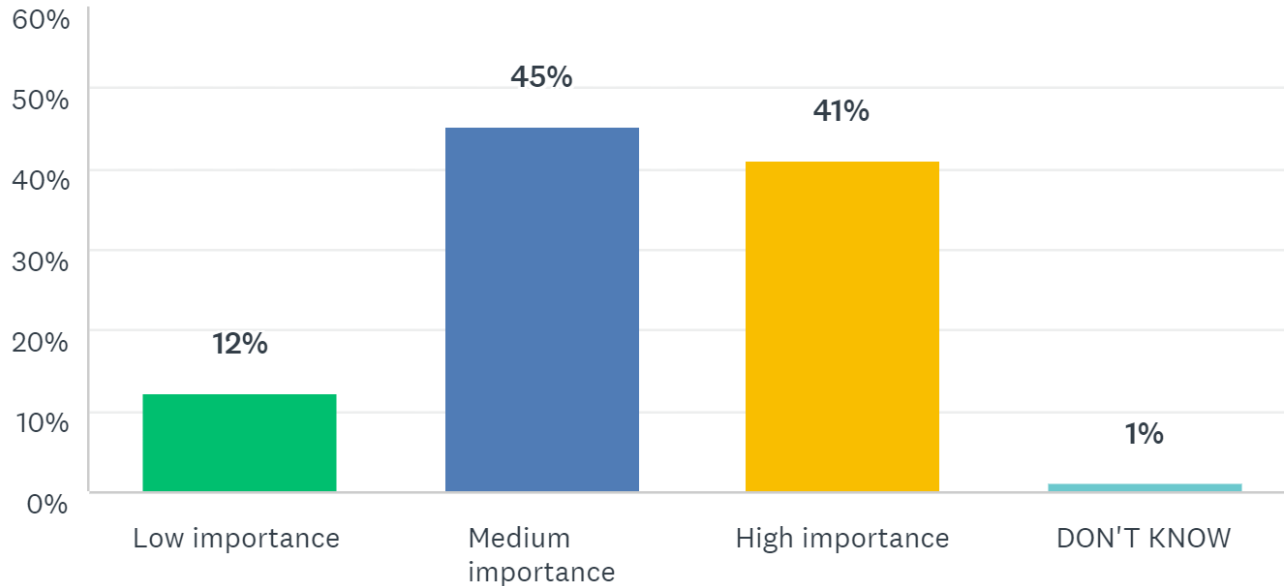
The question that was asked for each of the 12 topics (Q5-Q16) was: *Relatively how important is it that each topic be considered through the RTS? Please try not to rate them all high.* A high importance rating received a value of 3, medium importance was scored as 2, and a low rating was assigned 1 as the value.

Average Importance Rating (rating values: high=3, med=2, low=1)	
Environmental impacts (code name "Between the Creeks")	2.43
Trail costs and funding (code name "Pot of Gold")	2.41
Trail busyness (code name "Rush Hour")	2.26
Wildlife conflicts (code name "Danimal")	2.24
Trailhead access, parking and facilities (code name "[parking] LOTS")	2.24
Gaps in the trail network (code name "I'm Not Satisfied")	2.04
Trail closures (code name "After Hours")	2.00
Commercial, tenured and event use of trails (code name "Business Time")	2.00
Wayfinding (code name "Out There")	1.92
Trail use by trials motorbikes (code name "99er")	1.91
Land use conflicts (code name "D-Railment")	1.86
Unauthorized trails (code name "Section 102")	1.68

Q5: Trail busyness (code name “Rush Hour”)

Answered: 684 / Skipped: 115

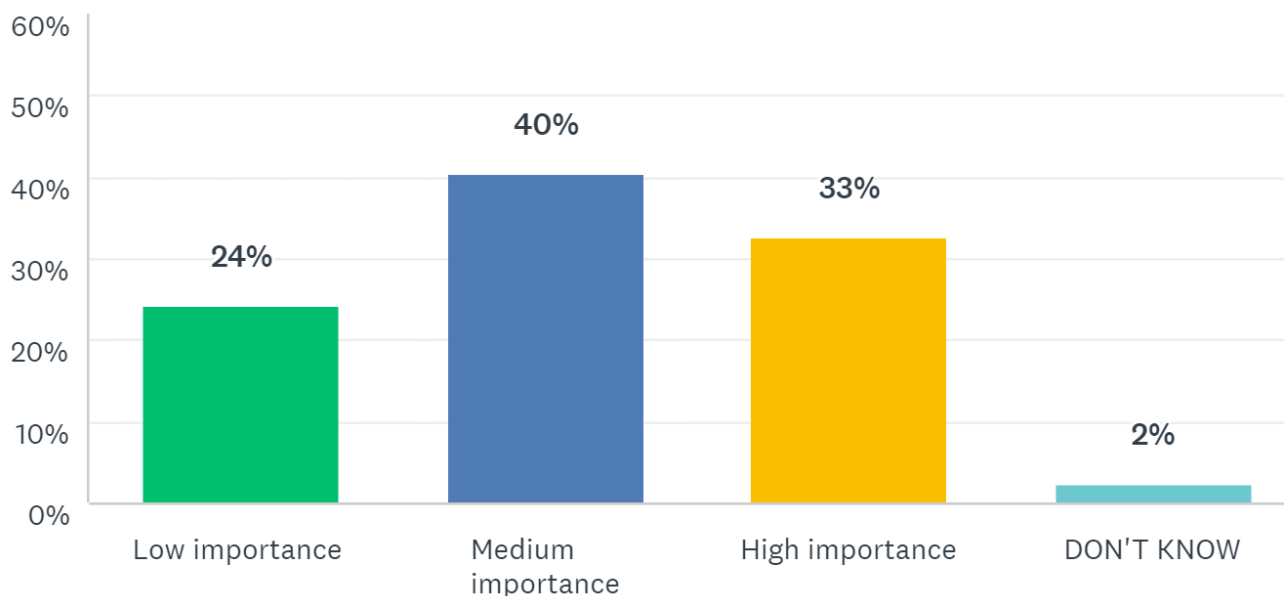
Topic description: Trail use by all user types is increasing, and there are different opinions about whether the trail network can accommodate demand. While crowding is based on personal opinion, there are some areas within the system that have become much busier. Increasing numbers not only affects the user experience, it also increases maintenance costs, the potential for human-wildlife conflict, and environmental impacts.



Q6: Gaps in the trail network (code name “I’m Not Satisfied”)

Answered: 684 / Skipped: 115

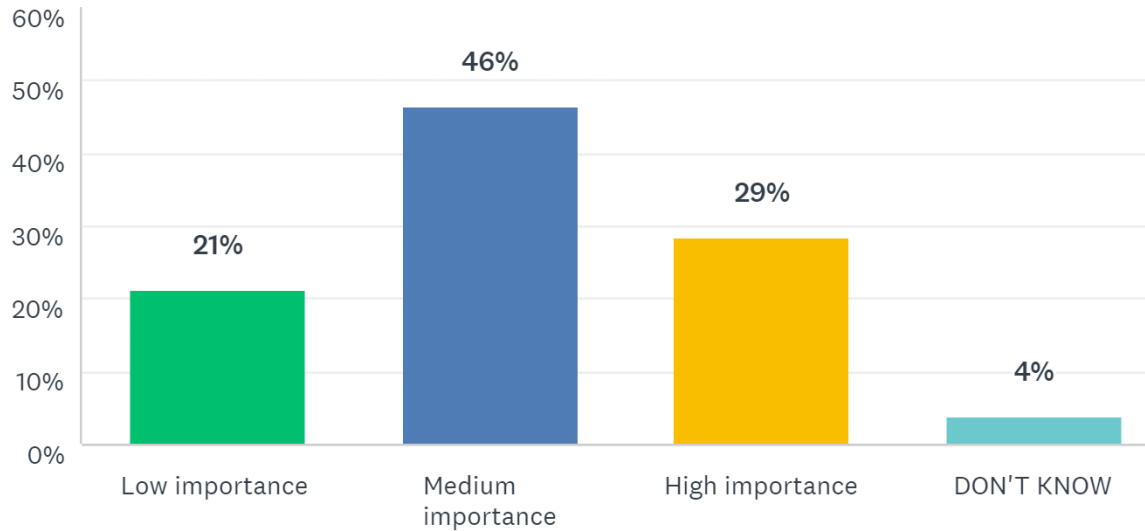
Topic description: There are different opinions about the gaps that exist in Whistler’s trail network – whether the gaps are related to trail types, levels or connections. And while some people would like to see more trails developed to fill the gaps, others question the need for more.



Q7: Commercial, tenured and event use of trails (code name “Business Time”)

Answered: 687 / Skipped: 112

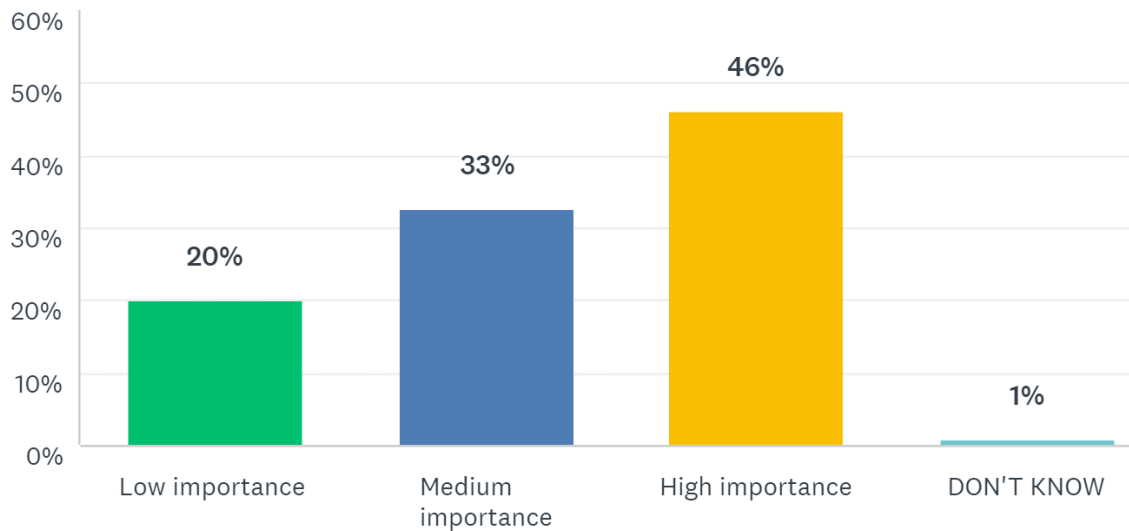
Topic description: As with overall trail use, use by commercial guide operators and use for events is increasing. While these uses have economic, safety, wayfinding and trail maintenance revenue benefits, it also presents some challenges, including increased volume of riders and increased trail maintenance costs.



Q8: Trailhead access, parking and facilities (code name “[parking] LOTS”)

Answered: 685 / Skipped: 114

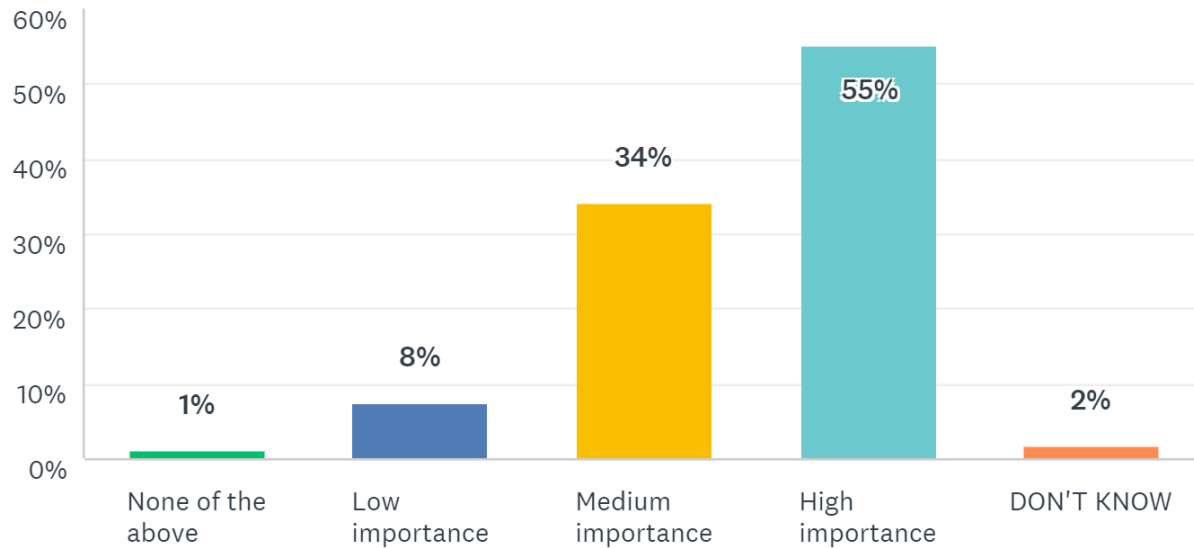
Topic description: Increasing trail use also impacts trailhead areas, especially when trailheads are located in residential neighbourhoods and trail users arrive in vehicles rather than by active transportation options. Increasing parking demand equates to increasing maintenance requirements, capacity, overflow and conflict issues, and consideration for parking expansion or relocation - all of which have financial implications. In some cases, it may not be possible or desirable to provide or expand parking areas.



Q9: Trail costs and funding (code name “Pot of Gold”)

Answered: 685 / Skipped: 114

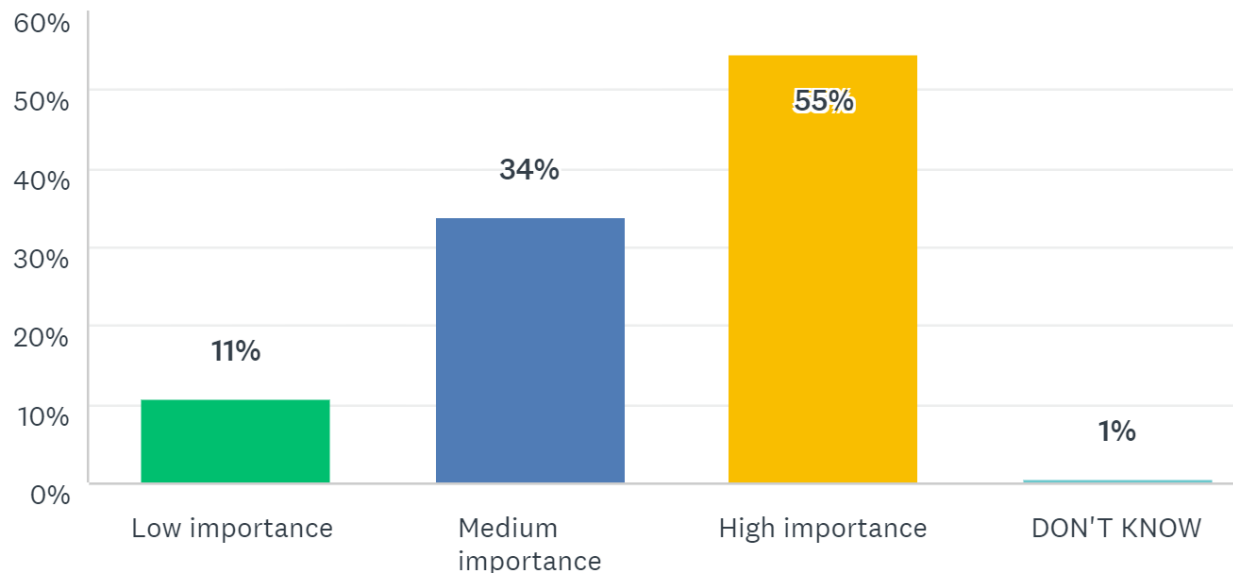
Topic description: The costs to maintain Whistler’s trail network increase annually, even without the addition of new amenities. These ongoing costs are carried by trail managers, taxpayers, and volunteers. The predominant mindset of trail users is that trails are available at no direct cost to the user.



Q10: Environmental impacts (code name “Between the Creeks”)

Answered: 686 / Skipped: 113

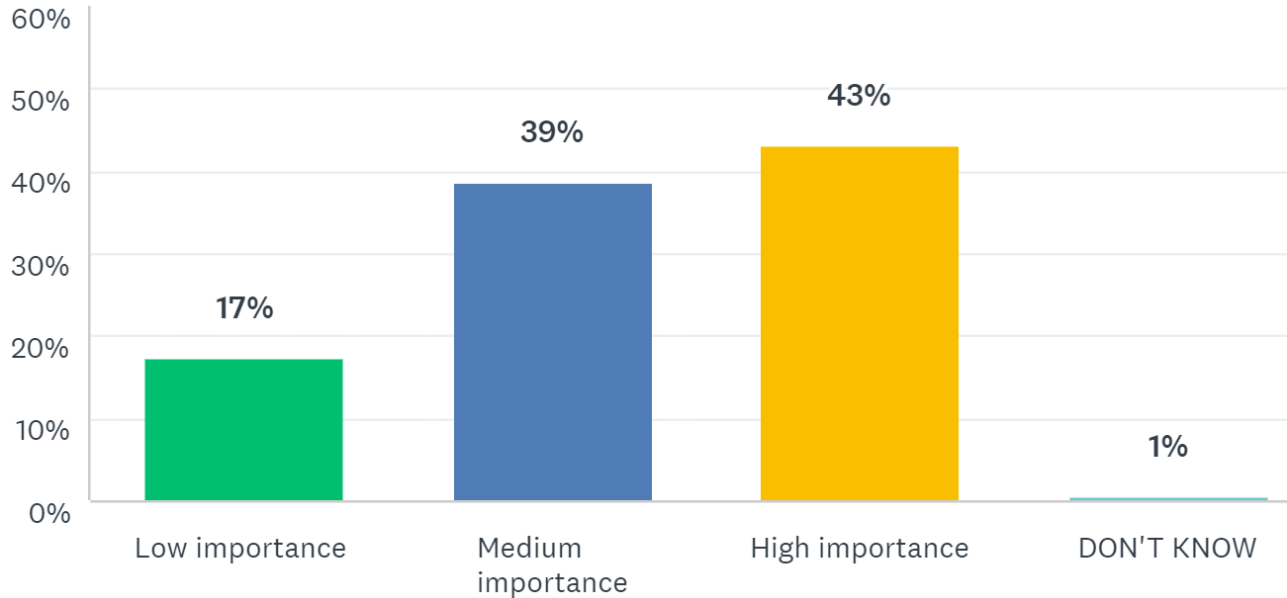
Topic description: Trail building, maintenance, use and vehicle use for accessing trails all have an impact on the natural environment and important habitats. Balancing the provision of trails (that deliver health, social and economic benefits) with environmental protection is challenging but important, as both are key to sense of place and quality of life.



Q11: Wildlife conflicts (code name “Danimal”)

Answered: 685 / Skipped: 114

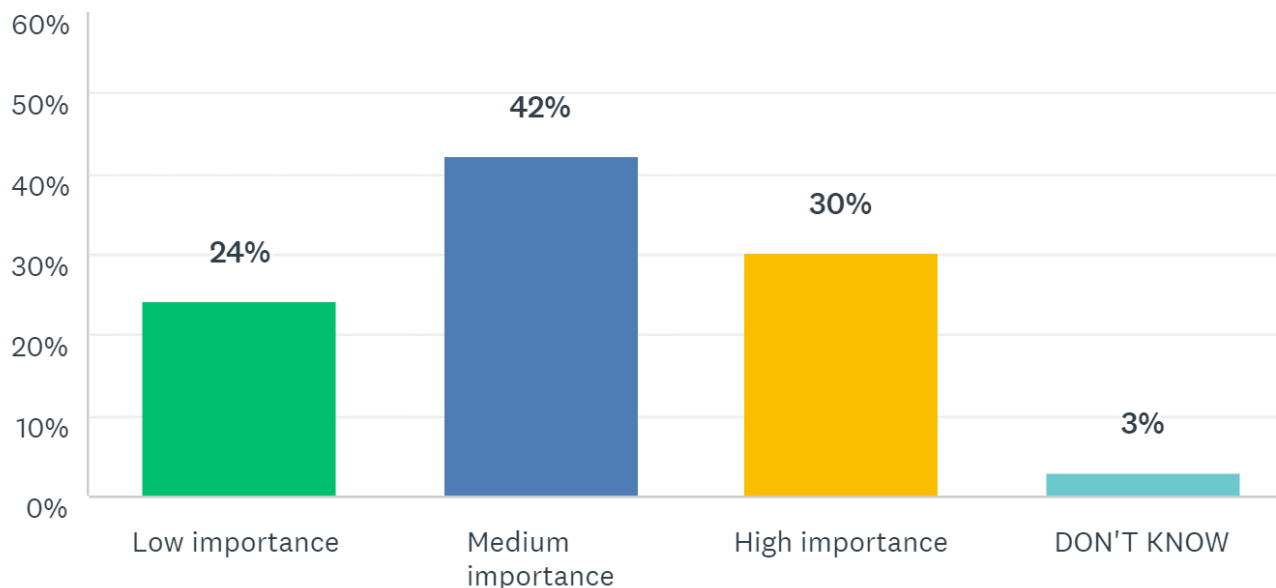
Topic description: Minimizing human-wildlife encounters is especially important when they pose a danger to either party involved. Increasing trail use, additional trail development in more remote areas, and e-bikes increase the likelihood of incidents.



Q12: Trail closures (code name “After Hours”)

Answered: 682 / Skipped: 117

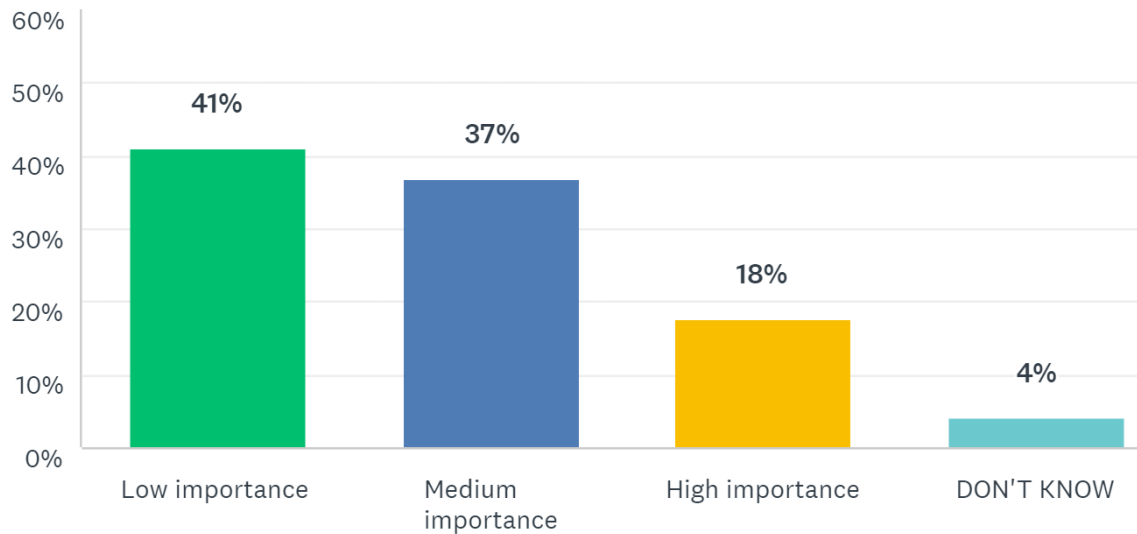
Topic description: The decision to permanently or temporarily close trails occurs for a number of reasons, including weather and trail conditions, the potential for wildlife encounters and tree thinning for wildfire mitigation. Regardless of the reason, the process for determining, communicating and enforcing closures is challenging but important for the protection of wildlife, users, the trails themselves, and property.



Q13: Unauthorized trails (code name “Section 102”)

Answered: 683 / Skipped: 116

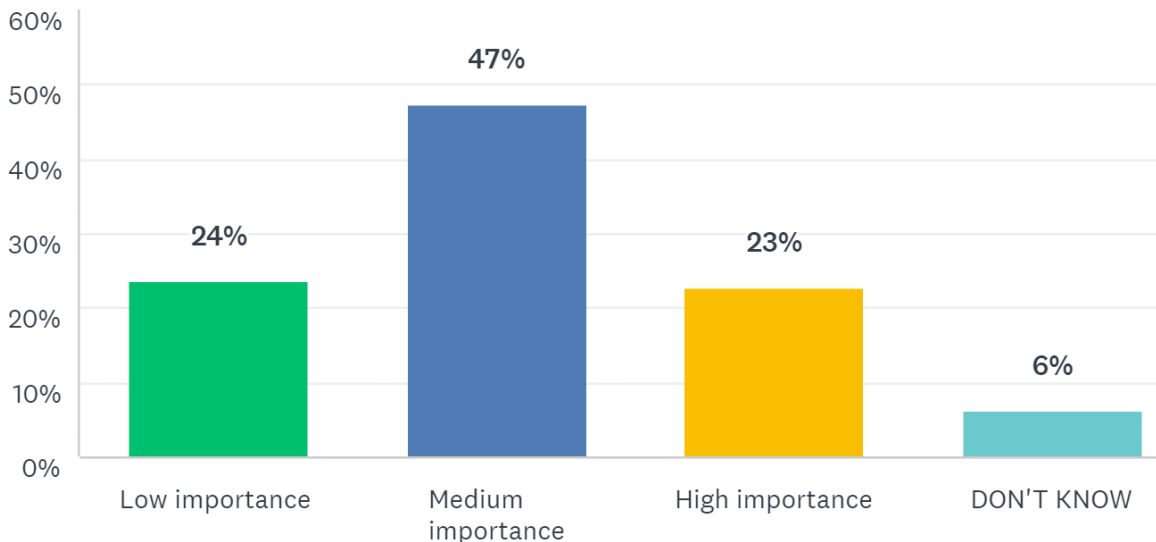
Topic description: Whistler has a long history of rogue trail building and many of the trails built up until seven or eight years ago lack formal permission. While in some cases unauthorized trails are well built and adopted into the formal network, in many cases these trails can cause a number of challenges related to on-going maintenance, liability, parking, trespass, conflict and habitat impacts.



Q14: Land use conflicts (code name “D-Railment”)

Answered: 674 / Skipped: 125

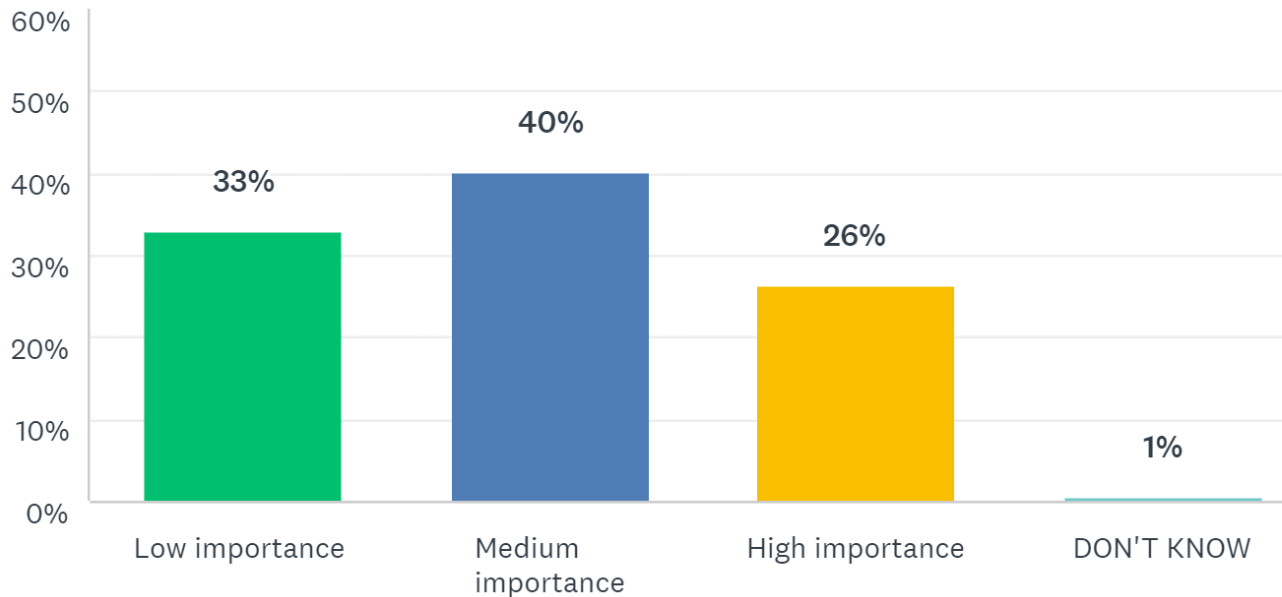
Topic description: Lack of planning and unauthorized trail building can result in conflicting land uses and unintended consequences. Resource and industrial activities such as tree thinning and harvesting, hydroelectric power line maintenance and road construction can impact trails and the trail experience. Further, these activities create easier access into forested areas, or ideal trail building conditions which can result in more unauthorized trail building.



Q15: Wayfinding (code name “Out There”)

Answered: 681 / Skipped: 118

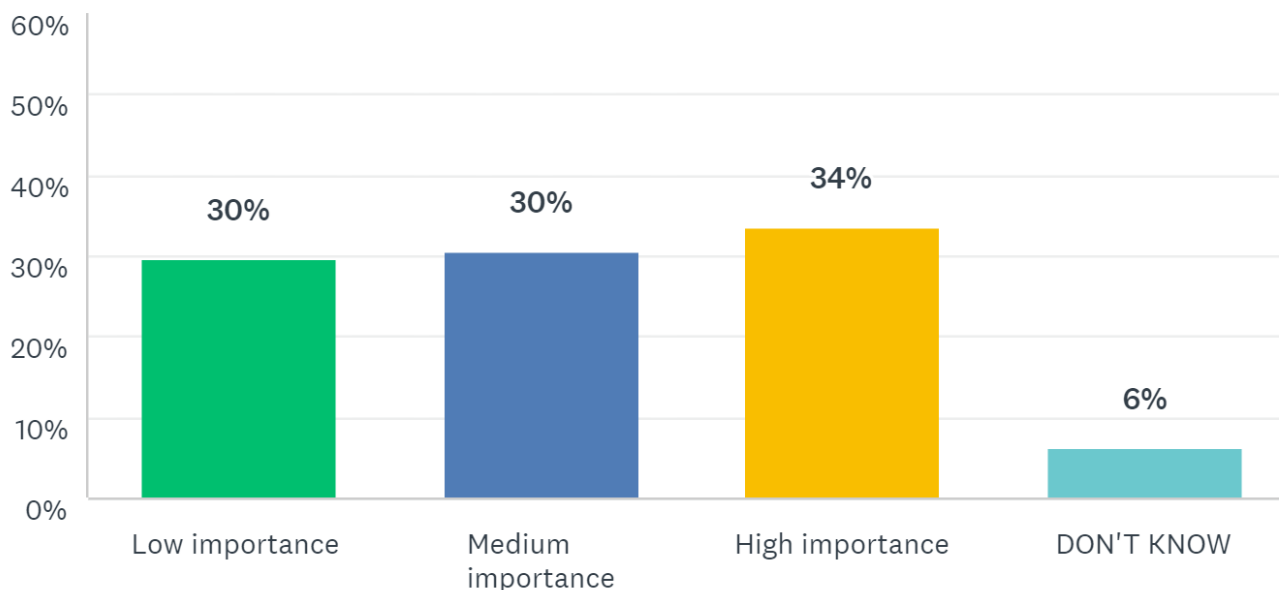
Topic description: Whistler’s trail signage system combined with the Trailforks platform has made wayfinding within Whistler’s trail network much easier for users. However, there is still room for improved coordination and additional information at trailheads, such as educational and safety information, on route messaging and interpretative information.



Q16: Trail use by trials motorbikes (code name “99er”)

Answered: 682 / Skipped: 117

Topic description: Motorized trials bikes are used on trails in some areas of Whistler. This use predates mountain biking and many of today’s mountain bike trails originated as trials motorcycle trails. Over the decades many of these trails have evolved with little planning or engagement to become non-motorized trails still lacking authorized status.



Q17: What other trail-related topics/issues/challenges should be considered through the development of the RTS?

Answered: 310 / Skipped: 489

Respondents were provided with the list of existing trail topics (below), and then asked what other trail related topics they would like to have considered through the RTS development. Many respondents reiterated the topics already listed; in fact, all topics below were reiterated in some way or another.

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Trail busyness | 7. Wildlife conflicts |
| 2. Gaps in the trail network | 8. Trail closures |
| 3. Commercial, tenured and event use | 9. Unauthorized trails |
| 4. Trailhead access, parking and facilities | 10. Land use conflicts |
| 5. Trail costs and funding | 11. Wayfinding |
| 6. Environmental impacts | 12. Trail use by trials motorbikes |

Additional topics identified by respondents included:

- Accessibility for those with mobility challenges (7 mentions)
- E-bike permissions and restrictions (Note: there were conflicting opinions here; some want e-bike policies to be more permissive, including increased access to alpine trails, while others want e-bikes to be more restricted and are concerned about the challenges they present.) (67 mentions)
- Trail safety (19 mentions)
- Dog access to and impacts on trails and safety (Note: there were conflicting opinions related to dogs on the trails; some respondents want to ensure dogs have off-leash access to trails, while others want more restrictions and enforcement, citing challenges related to safety and waste.) (31 mentions)
- Education/information beyond just wayfinding to include etiquette, safety, direction, etc. (49 mentions)
- Winter/all-season access to trails (5 mentions)
- Use restrictions for hiking-only trails (separation from biking uses) (18 mentions)

Section 3: Trail projects proposed

Once the RTS is developed, it will guide future trail development. In the meantime, four trails are in the planning stages and require feedback:

1. Emerald Trail – No Flow Zone and One Duck Lake Access (upon municipal land in Emerald Estates)
2. Cultured Climb Part 2 (upon provincial Crown lands above Alpine Meadows)
3. Mystic-Function Trail (upon provincial Crown lands near Function Junction)
4. D'Arcy Burke Memorial Trail (upon provincial Crown lands and within the Whistler Interpretive Forest near Cheakamus Crossing)

In the survey, information about each of the proposed trails was presented to respondents, including a description, the benefits, and potential challenges and mitigation strategies. Respondents were then asked to identify *additional* challenges and mitigation strategies. The sections below include the information presented for each of the trails, and the list of additional challenges and mitigation strategies.

Emerald Trail – No Flow Zone and One Duck Lake Access

Description of proposed trail: Approximately 150-meter green/blue difficulty-level gravel trail providing pedestrian and non-motorized bicycle access to existing trails in the “No Flow Zone” located west of the Emerald Estates neighbourhood. (See map below)

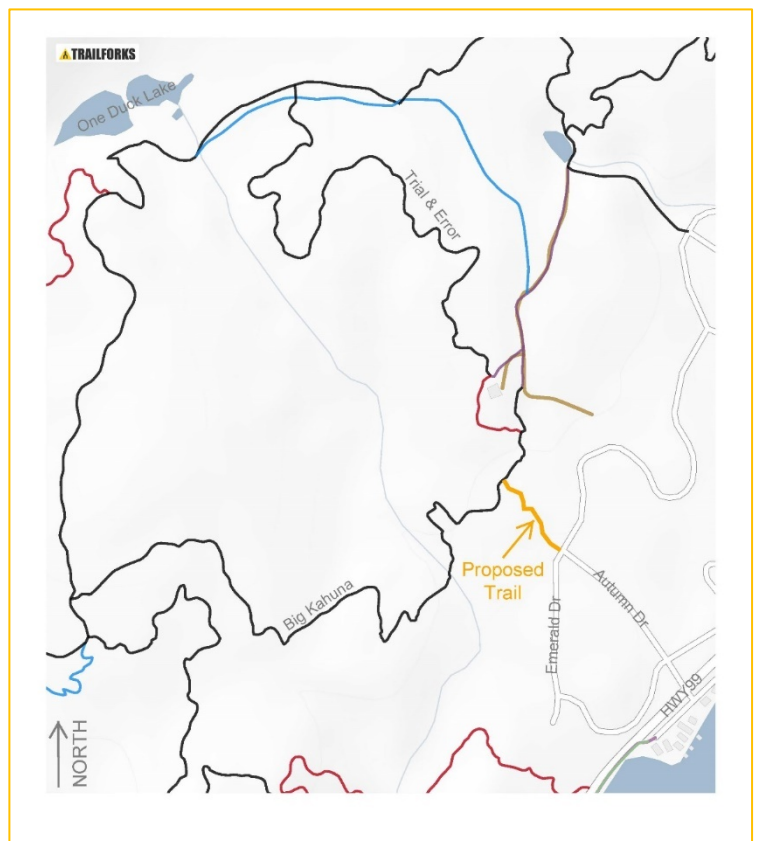
Benefit: Provides legal public access to the lands west of the Emerald neighbourhood, following closure of the historical access which was in a trespass situation across privately owned lands.

Challenges:

- Managing on-street parking
- Maintaining residents' privacy and enjoyment

Planned mitigation:

- Install on-street signage that clarifies parking restrictions and requests behaviour that is respectful of nearby residents.
- Monitor parking compliance in 2021 (repeat the monitoring started in 2020)
- Track parking and noise complaints and infractions and adjust patrol levels if necessary.



Q18: What other challenges (beyond those listed above) should we be aware of related to this proposed trail?

Answered: 139 / Skipped: 660

Q19: What other mitigation measures (beyond those listed above) could be considered to facilitate the successful implementation of this trail?

Answered: 45 / Skipped: 754

Capacity/busyness: limited capacity for the trail, lake and lakeshore to accommodate increased use and impacts.

Avoid trail promotion; restrict commercial use;

Environmental impacts and wildlife conflict: Concerns that increased use/access will intensify the impacts on the lake (e.g. water quality) and wildlife in the area.

Develop a monitoring and management plan for the lake; collect baseline information; monitor human/wildlife conflict; sign and fence 'no-go' zones to protect sensitive areas; avoid trail promotion.

Amenities: Lack of trailhead, trail and lake area amenities, and associated impacts.

Install needed amenities, including outhouse, waste/recycling bins, dog waste bags, designated camping spots, benches, bike rack at trailhead for walkers/hikers.

Waste: Garbage, dog waste and human waste were identified as existing challenges that will be exacerbated with increased use.

Providing bins and information about waste was suggested

Wildfire: Concerns about users making fires and smoking, and the potential to cause a wildfire.

Signage about restrictions and risks

Maintenance: Increased access will require increased maintenance and associated funding.

Budget for needed maintenance in the area

Motorized use: Potential conflict, impacts and noise from motorized use.

Some mentioned that trials bikes should be kept out of the area; others suggested they continue to be allowed in the no-flow zone.

Camping and partying: Already occurs, potential to increase with trail addition and promotion.

None provided

Conflict between users, e.g., bikers, walkers/hikers and off-leash dogs.

Trail etiquette signage, directional trails

Vehicle traffic and road safety: Identified safety issues included: increased traffic through Emerald; increased highway crossing by bikers/pedestrians getting to/from the trail; trailhead location near a blind corner on the road.

Traffic calming through the neighbourhood; improve highway 99 crossing infrastructure;

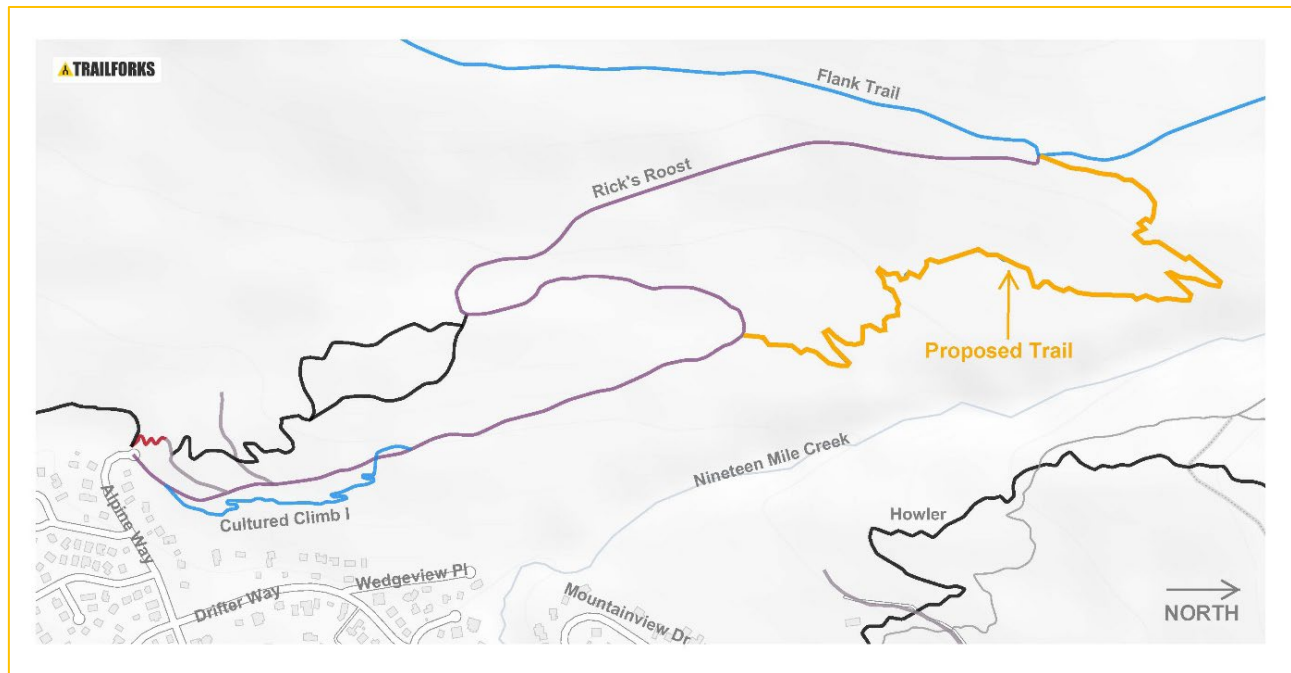
Parking was reiterated as a key challenge, including impacts on neighbouring homes and

Improve trail access from adjacent areas/trails to minimize the need for parking; improve transit to

the trailhead area (congestion, waste, noise, etc.)

the trailhead; locals' only parking in the area (parking permit system); no on-street parking; alternative parking areas created in suitable locations nearby with clear signage to direct traffic there; 'ride to ride' campaign to reduce driving/parking; clear signage, strict monitoring and enforcement of parking restrictions;

Cultured Climb Part 2



Description of proposed trail: A 1.6km extension of the existing blue difficulty-level climbing trail (Cultured Climb Part 1) above Alpine Meadows that connects Rick's Roost to the Flank Trail. (See map below)

Benefits:

- Provides a more user-friendly gradient and improved experience when compared to the existing road.
- Provides an alternative route should the existing road be required for future resource road purposes.

Challenge: Potential to increase the use of trails in the area and potentially exacerbate existing local issues (e.g., rogue trail building, parking).

Mitigation:

- On-street signage has been added in the area, clarifying parking restrictions and requesting behaviour that is respectful of nearby residents.
- Monitoring and enforcement of the parking restrictions has been implemented.

Planned mitigation:

- Continue to monitor on-street parking and noise issues.

- Ongoing outreach to rogue trail builders about the unintended consequences and impacts of unauthorized trail building.
- Continue requests to the Crown lands approving agency (Recreation Sites and Trails BC) to address unauthorized trail construction.
- Confirm with provincial biologists and the Crown lands approving agency (Recreation Sites and Trails BC) that sufficient environmental and habitat information exists and has been considered through the approval process.

Q20: What other challenges (beyond those listed above) should we be aware of related to this proposed trail?

Answered: 139 / Skipped: 660

Direction: The likelihood that the trail will also be used as a downhill trail was identified since there are few blue descent trails in area.

Conflict: The potential for conflict between bikers and hikers/runners was identified.

Alpine access: Increasing access to alpine areas and the resulting safety issues was identified.

Motorized use: Concerns about motorized use and associated impacts in the area was a concern to some (while the desire to allow motorized trials bike access was voiced by others).

Wildfire risk: Some were concerned about the potential for increased wildfire risk due to increased use in the area

Commercial use: Some concern raised about commercial use without tenure.

Difficulty: Some concern that even as a blue climb trail it will be difficult.

Q21: What other mitigation measures (beyond those listed above) could be considered to facilitate the successful implementation of this trail?

Answered: 103 / Skipped: 696

Signage to either advise of up-only direction, or alert for potential descending traffic.

Signage to communicate the multi-use nature of the trail and to reminder users about sharing the trail and trail etiquette.

More and improved signage about trail difficulty, wildlife and safety.

Gates, monitoring, clear signage/restrictions

Restrict access and limit users in the area

Enforcement and penalties

Design suggestions, including moderate slope and wide switchbacks.

Not surprisingly, impacts on the neighbourhood and the potential for human/wildlife conflict were reiterated by survey respondents in response to Q20.

Neighbourhood impacts mentioned most included: parking issues, vehicle traffic and garbage.

The majority of responses to Q21 focused on mitigation measures to address the parking challenges at the trailhead, with suggestions including:

- prohibiting parking at the top of Alpine Way, directing all parking to satellite locations (Meadow Park, Whistler Secondary).

- allowing some parking at the top of Alpine Way, directing overflow to satellite locations.
- offering a shuttle from the Village.
- providing transit service close to the trailhead (with adequate bike racks).
- creating a new parking lot at the top of Alpine Way or at the end of Alta Lake Road.
- educating users on parking restrictions, locations and the importance of active transportation or transit to access recreation activities; and
- engaging residents about the importance of community access to trails, even via residential areas.

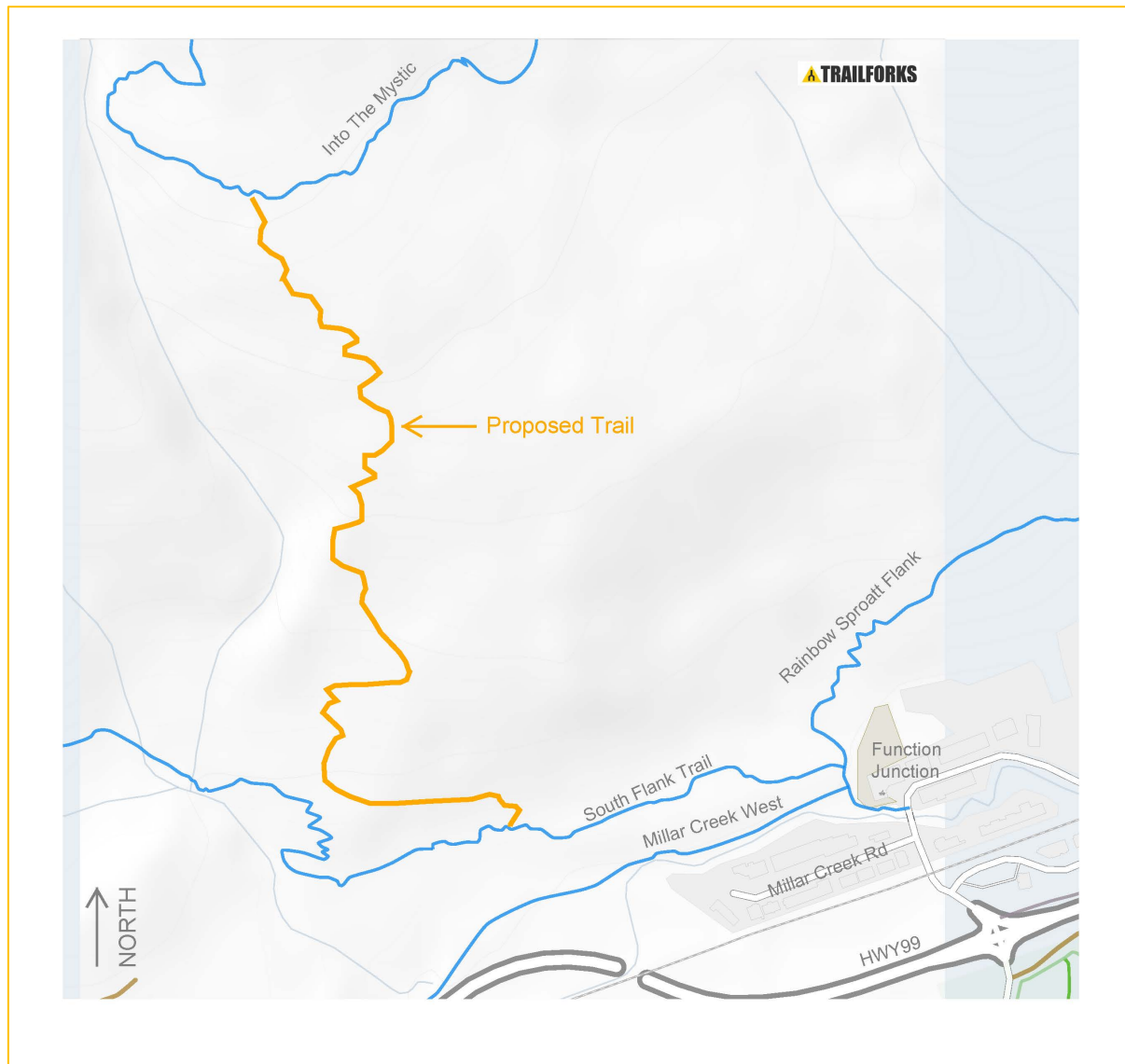
Other mitigation measures to address neighbourhood impacts included installing washrooms, clear signage about restrictions and etiquette generally, and more patrol and enforcement of regulations.

Wildlife mitigation measures included either seasonal closures or permanent closes/rerouting of some sections to avoid wildlife conflict and impacts.

Of the 'other' comments received that did not respond directly to challenges or mitigation measures, the majority fell into one of two camps:

- **Just build it:** A number of respondents love the proposed climb trail and support building it.
- **Not needed:** Others question the use of resources for a climb trail in the area when there is already uphill access via Rick's Roost.

Mystic-Function Trail



Description of proposed trail: A 2.7km blue/black difficulty-level descent trail from the lower portion of Into the Mystic down to the Flank Trail near Function Junction. (See map below)

Benefits:

- Build on the investment made in the Into the Mystic climb trail.
- Provides a moderate grade lower elevation descent trail.
- Offers early and late season riding opportunities in the area.
- Provides a shorter alternative to the full Into the Mystic/Lord of the Squirrels loop.

Challenge: Potential environmental and wildlife impacts.

Planned mitigation: Confirm with provincial biologists and the Crown lands approving agency (Recreation Sites and Trails BC) that sufficient environmental and wildlife information exists and has been considered through the approval process.

Q22: What other challenges (beyond those listed above) should we be aware of related to this proposed trail?

Answered: 115 / Skipped: 684

Function Junction impacts: Concerns about the impact on Function in terms of overall busyness, parking, washroom access, garbage/recycling, etc. Parking was a key concern raised by many, including that Function is already full of cars and the Whistler Interpretive Forest lot already fills up on busy summer days.

Trail busyness: Concerns that the proposed trail will increase use and traffic on the LOTS network, which is already considered too busy by some.

Trail maintenance: Concerns about the cost of maintaining the new trail and others in the area due to heavy use

Conflict: Concerns that the trail will be used as an ascent trail by hikers/runners, which will cause conflict and safety issues with descending bikers.

Difficulty: Concerns about the trail being rated black, and related safety issues at the end of a long ride.

Environmental and wildlife challenges were reiterated by a number of respondents, many of whom voiced their opposition to the trail.

Q23: What other mitigation measures (beyond those listed above) could be considered to facilitate the successful implementation of this trail?

Answered: 58 / Skipped: 741

Expand patio space in Function; offer a park and ride service from other central lots (e.g., Village, Creekside); improve crossing infrastructure across the highway to/from Function; add more parking in Function; install public washroom/outhouse.

Machine building the trail instead of hand-building it; don't build the trail at all so it doesn't increase overall use of LOTS.

Machine build instead of hand-building; ensure proper drainage.

Design for multi-use; thin trees for improved sightlines.

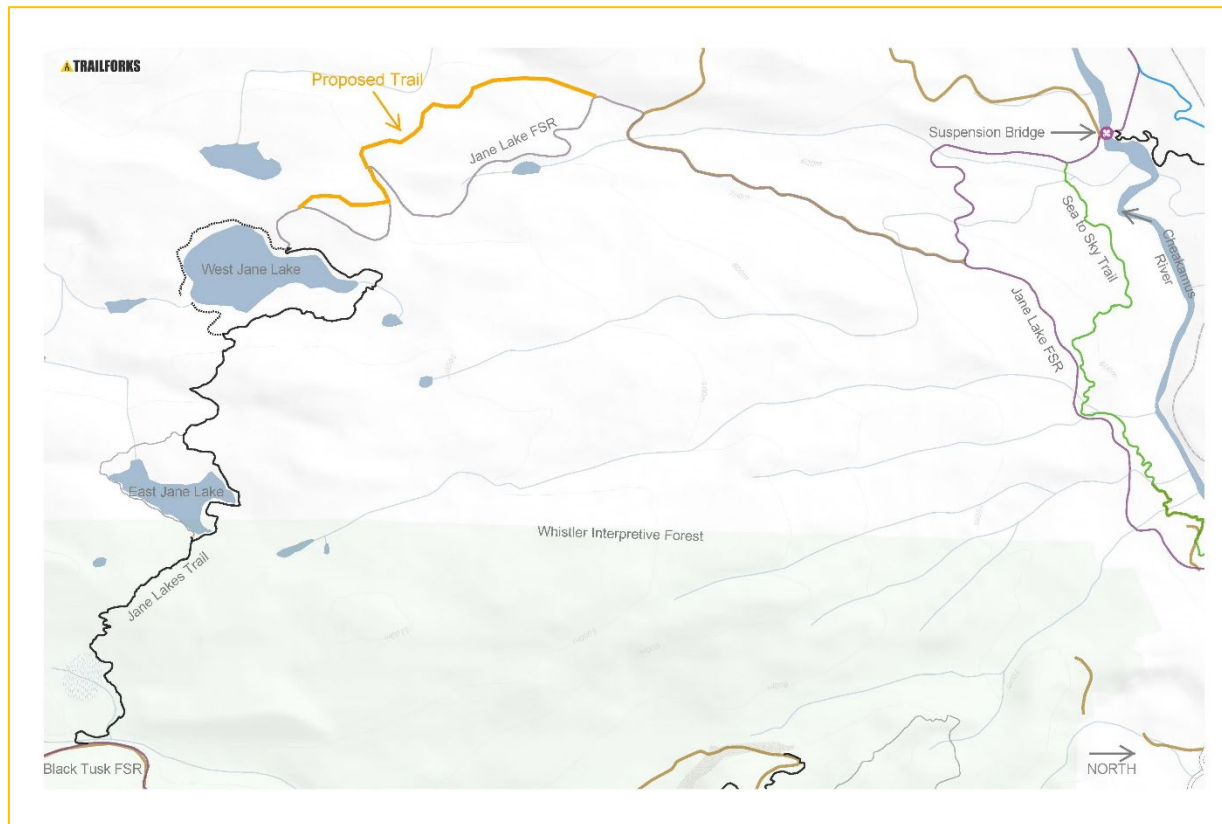
Design the trail to be strictly blue; add signage and educate riders to the challenging length of the loop, and the challenging nature of the LOTS descent.

Better enforcement of restrictions (e.g., no dogs in the alpine, no e-bikes); more signage and education about etiquette (e.g., packing out what you take in); and seasonal closures to avoid wildlife impacts and encounters; avoid wetland areas; include Indigenous people/knowledge of the area in addition to biologists; consult with local experts as well, including AWARE, Whistler Naturalists.

While not directly related to the questions asked about the proposed Mystic-Function trail, a number of respondents used the opportunity to voice their opinion that they would like to see Class 1 e-bikes permitted on this proposed trail and on the LOTS/Into the Mystic network. The decision to restrict e-bikes was made in 2019 as part of the draft e-mobility device policy supported by Council, For further info please refer to whistler.ca/ebikes.

A number of respondents questioned the need for another descent trail in the area, suggesting instead that a better/easier climb trail to access Into the Mystic should be developed instead; some indicated that Function would be a good starting point for the climb trail, while others suggested along Alta Lake Road. One suggestion was still in favour of a descent trail but that it should end along Alta Lake Road where most start the ride anyway, since most riders don't begin the LOTS loop in Function.

D'Arcy Burke Memorial Trail



Description of proposed trail: A 1.5-2 km hand-built black difficulty-level descending trail in two segments roughly paralleling the upper half of the Janes Lakes FSR. (See map below)

Benefits:

- Creates an 'epic' 15-20km lower elevation technical cross-country loop, completing the Jane Lakes Trail circuit and involving Riverside, LSD, Black Tusk FSR, Jane Lakes and the Sea to Sky Trail.
- Offers greater technical difficulty for advanced users – both hikers and riders.
- Improves the trail experience as compared to the FSR.
- Memorializes D'Arcy Burke with a trail type he loved, in an area he loved.

Challenges:

- Potential environmental and wildlife impacts.
- Recently constructed trail along north side of Jane Lakes East, which is part of the larger 'epic' loop, is currently unauthorized, and there may be some environmental challenges.
- Potential compatibility issues between the trail use and the prospective future geopark site.

Planned mitigation:

- Confirm status, suitability, and management responsibility of recently constructed trail along the north side of Jane Lakes and, if required, recommend necessary actions.
- Confirm with provincial biologists and the Crown lands approving agency (Recreation Sites and Trails BC) that sufficient environmental and wildlife information exists and has been considered through the approval process.

Q24: What other challenges (beyond those listed above) should we be aware of related to this proposed trail?

Answered: 80 / Skipped: 719

Q25: What other mitigation measures (beyond those listed above) could be considered to facilitate the successful implementation of this trail?

Answered: 45 / Skipped: 754

Amenities: Lack of trailhead, trail and lake area amenities, and associated impacts.

Install needed amenities, including washrooms, waste/recycling bins, designated camping spots, designated lake access points for swimming.

Parking: Existing parking areas (Train Wreck, Cheakamus, Black Tusk FSR, are not adequate to accommodate existing volumes at peak times.

Create new parking along Jane Lake FSR; larger parking lots at Train Wreck or the Interpretive Forest

Neighbourhood impacts: Additional traffic through Cheakamus

Keep parking areas out of Cheakamus; clear signage so visitors don't get lost in the neighbourhood

Busyness: Concerns about the Jane Lakes area becoming too busy, and the need to preserve its remoteness and tranquility.

Discourage social media posting; avoid promoting it with visitors; don't create a geopark in the area

Conflict: Use by bikers and hikers on a narrow trail, and directional challenges.

Signage, pull-out areas for hikers to move off the trail

Difficulty: Already too many black trails in the area.

Some voiced desire for a blue trail, while others mentioned the suitability for it being a black trail.

Safety: Remote location and length/challenge of the riding may result in more search and rescue calls.

Clear Trailforks information and signage about the remoteness and challenging nature of the trails in the area.

Maintenance: Remote and loamy terrain will require significant effort to maintain.

Design and build it well in the first place

Motorized use: Remote location will see high level of use by motorized recreation and e-bikes.

None provided

Rogue trail building

More timely approval by the province and RMOW to decrease rogue building

Environmental impacts:

Comprehensive management plan should be developed for the two lakes and surrounding area; amenities should be installed to mitigate user impacts, including washrooms, waste/recycling bins, designated camping spots, designated lake access points for swimming,

Some respondents questioned the need for the new trail. Of those, most did so by weighing what other trails might be constructed in less remote areas that might meet a greater user demand; a few others questioned the need based on the existence of adequate trails in the area already.

Section 4: Draft Objectives and Vision for Whistler Trails

The draft objective and vision statements – once refined based on community input – will be used to guide the development of the Recreational Trails Strategy. They were drafted based on existing documents, including Whistler’s Vision, Official Community Plan, Recreation and Leisure Master Plan, the Sea to Sky Corridor Trail Strategy, and others. Respondents were asked to provide input that will inform refinements to the draft content.

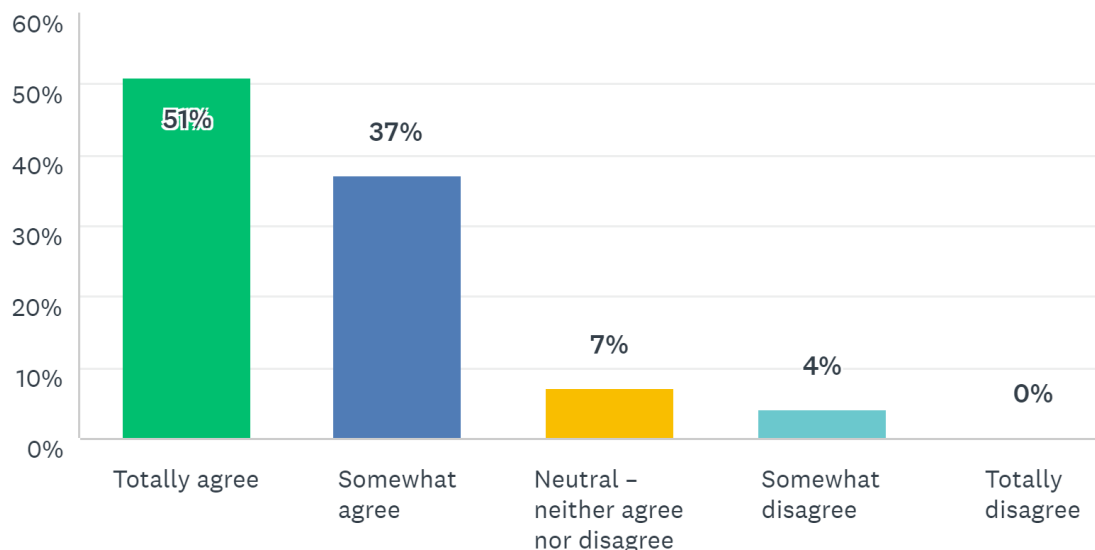
DRAFT Objectives

These statements articulate what we’re aiming to achieve with Whistler’s trails and trail-related amenities.

- Support good physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being for all ages and abilities.
- Protect sensitive ecosystems, wildlife, habitat and biodiversity. Where natural areas are accessed and enjoyed for recreation and overall wellbeing, do so in a responsible way.
- Contribute to the tourism-based economy, offering recreation opportunities that meet market demand.
- Enhance Whistler’s mountain culture and sense of place.
- Enable accessibility options for persons with mobility restrictions.
- Minimize the need for and impacts of private vehicle use to access trails.
- Minimize conflict between all user groups, wildlife and other stakeholders.
- Maximize expected levels of safety.
- Minimize risk and liability to land/trail managers.
- Minimize the financial cost of the trail network.
- Maximize clarity and consistency for users within Whistler and with other jurisdictions.

Q26: To what extent do you agree that these objectives articulate what we should be aiming to achieve with Whistler’s trail network?

Answered: 577 / Skipped: 222



Q27: What (if any) changes or additions would you suggest to the statements?

Answered: 192 / Skipped: 607

Objectives	Suggested changes or additions
Support good physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being for all ages and abilities.	Broaden diversity/inclusion statement beyond just ages and abilities.
Protect sensitive ecosystems, wildlife, habitat and biodiversity. Where natural areas are accessed and enjoyed for recreation and overall wellbeing, do so in a responsible way.	Special/secret community places and drinking water quality must also be protected.
Contribute to the tourism-based economy, offering recreation opportunities that meet market demand.	Need to emphasize community somewhere too; this 'tourism-based economy' statement along with no mention of community makes it seem as though residents are less important than visitors. Aiming to 'meet market demand' should be toned down (consider language change to 'user' instead of 'market'); demand for more trails will always be there; need to manage demand to some extent; can't keep building more forever. Need to manage visitor volumes and impacts; encourage visitation by those who care for the environment as locals do.
Enhance Whistler's mountain culture and sense of place.	<i>No changes/additions identified</i>
Enable accessibility options for persons with mobility restrictions.	Consider combining with the first objective
Minimize the need for and impacts of private vehicle use to access trails.	Add mention of climate action/GHG reduction Clarify motorized/trails bike direction
Minimize conflict between all user groups, wildlife and other stakeholders.	Consider something more positive than 'minimize conflict' between users
Maximize expected levels of safety.	Also need to maintain the thrill/fun of the trails Minimize SAR calls
Minimize risk and liability to land/trail managers.	<i>No changes/additions identified</i>
Minimize the financial cost of the trail network.	Rather than minimize cost, the objective should be to optimize the investment in the trail network, maximize the return/benefits

	from investments in the network, or balance the costs and the benefits. Include something about sharing/spreading the cost of the network amongst users, especially including commercial operators. Sustainable funding for trail development and maintenance should be the objective (rather than reliance on volunteers and grants as is largely the case at the moment)
Maximize clarity and consistency for users within Whistler and with other jurisdictions.	<i>No changes/additions identified</i>

Respondents also recommended adding these elements/statements to the set of objectives:

- Recognizing the territories of the Lil'wat Nation and the Squamish Nation, involving them in planning, and learning from their knowledge of the land.
- Education about both the importance and impacts of trails and trail use (benefits and challenges).
- Valuing/nurturing local trail-building passion and expertise.
- Maintaining the 'naturalness' of places and trails as much as possible; it's why people are here.
- Managing trail capacity and disperse trail users (but not too far and within safe limits related to ability).

Finally, a number of respondents were concerned that the statements were ranked in order of priority, with many requesting that the statement about the environment be listed first. *NOTE: The statements are in no particular order, and the intent is to work toward achieving all objectives, while recognizing that in some situations there will be trade-offs between them, with the need to weigh critical factors, values and the specific circumstances.*

DRAFT Vision

The vision statements articulate what Whistler trails and trail-related amenities must be in order to achieve the objectives above.

Whistler's trails connect us. They connect us to the places and people we love. They bring us together and help us escape. They flood us with adrenaline and soothe us with serenity. They contribute to individual health, community wellbeing and economic prosperity.

With an understanding of all that they deliver, Whistler will continue to work toward a network of trails that are:

Carefully planned.

This means:

- Sensitive areas and critical wildlife habitat are avoided
- Impacts on natural areas and wildlife are minimized
- Trailheads are located to have minimal impact on residential areas and to minimize the need for and impact of access by private vehicle
- Authorizations are secured

Responsibly built, maintained and managed.

This means:

- Safety and construction standards are met
- Trail use is managed to protect the experience, safety, natural areas and the trails.

Diverse, connected and clear.

This means:

- A variety of trail difficulty levels, experiences and accessibility options are delivered
- Trails are linked together
- Trails are easy to find

- Connections are off-road as much as possible

Responsibly accessed and used.

This means:

- Trail users care for and support trails, the natural environment and each other
- Trail users are respectful of trailhead areas and neighbours
- Trail users choose active forms of transportation to get to trails as much as possible
- Trail users respect parking and trail signage, including closures

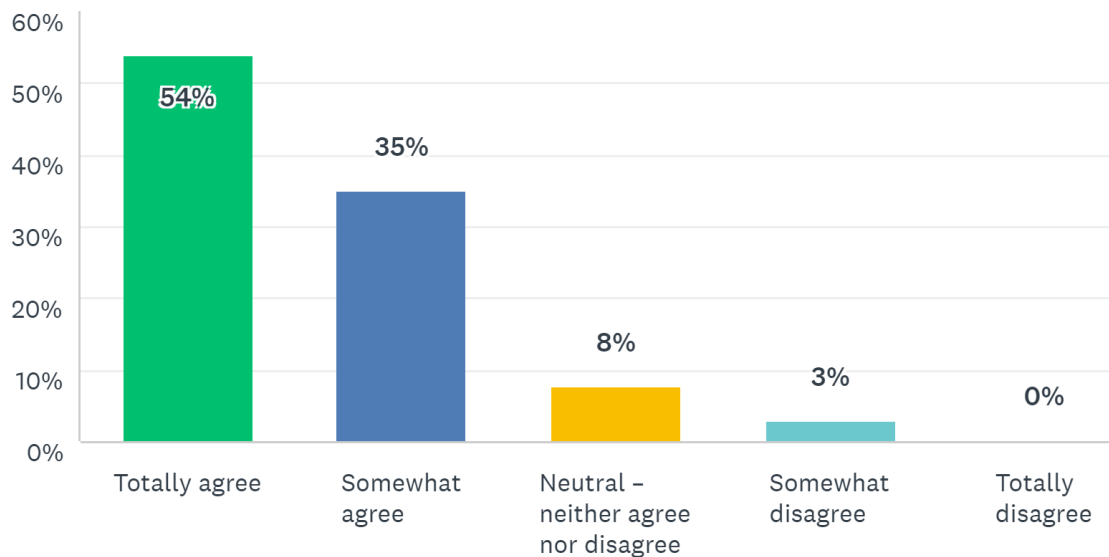
Sufficient, supported, and within limits.

This means:

- There are enough trails to meet community and visitor needs
- Limits to trail development (including environmental, experiential, financial, human) are understood and practiced/adhered to
- Where trail demand exceeds trail capacity, responsible and innovative management practices are employed.
- Trails are supported within financial and human resource means, and with adequate and sustainable funding approaches.

Q28: To what extent do you agree that these vision statements describe what the vision for Whistler's trails should be – now and into the future?

Answered: 551 / Skipped: 248



Q29: What (if any) changes or additions would you suggest to the statements?

Answered: 107 / Skipped: 692

Vision statements	Suggested changes or additions
Carefully planned. <i>This means:</i> • Sensitive areas and critical wildlife habitat are avoided • Impacts on natural areas and wildlife are minimized • Trailheads are located to have minimal impact on residential areas and to minimize the need for and impact of access by private vehicle • Authorizations are secured	Culturally sensitive areas should also be avoided. Strengthen the statement about authorizations being secure before building; prevent rogue building.
Responsibly built, maintained and managed. <i>This means:</i> • Safety and construction standards are met • Trail use is managed to protect the experience, safety, natural areas and the trails.	Need to also protect culturally sensitive places and special community places. Monitoring is missing; need to monitor trail use, environmental impacts and other indicators.

Diverse, connected and clear. This means: • A variety of trail difficulty levels, experiences and accessibility options are delivered • Trails are linked together • Trails are easy to find • Connections are off-road as much as possible	Add “quality” or “world-class” to the description of Whistler trails and what we’re aiming for. Add more inspiration; better description of what the network will look like in 2030. Add more about what the trails offer, e.g., adventure, fun, etc. Ensure hiking/running activities are clearly included; at the moment the bias in the trail system seems to be toward biking. Add mention of all-season access to some trails for winter activities.
Responsibly accessed and used. <i>This means:</i> • Trail users care for and support trails, the natural environment and each other • Trail users are respectful of trailhead areas and neighbours • Trail users choose active forms of transportation to get to trails as much as possible • Trail users respect parking and trail signage, including closures	Address user conflict more explicitly; move that element to the statement about respect and add etiquette. Strengthen the active transportation statement; this is critical to neighbourhoods and climate action.
Sufficient, supported, and within limits. <i>This means:</i> • There are enough trails to meet community and visitor needs • Limits to trail development (including environmental, experiential, financial, human) are understood and practiced/adhered to • Where trail demand exceeds trail capacity, responsible and innovative management practices are employed. • Trails are supported within financial and human resource means, and with adequate and sustainable funding approaches.	Add something about their being enough trails to disperse users and reduce potential for conflict. Funding should include user-pay sources, including visitors and commercial operators. State that the value of the trail system is recognized.

Respondents also recommended adding these elements to the vision statements:

- Include a commitment to integrate First Nations knowledge and culture into planning and delivery of the trail network

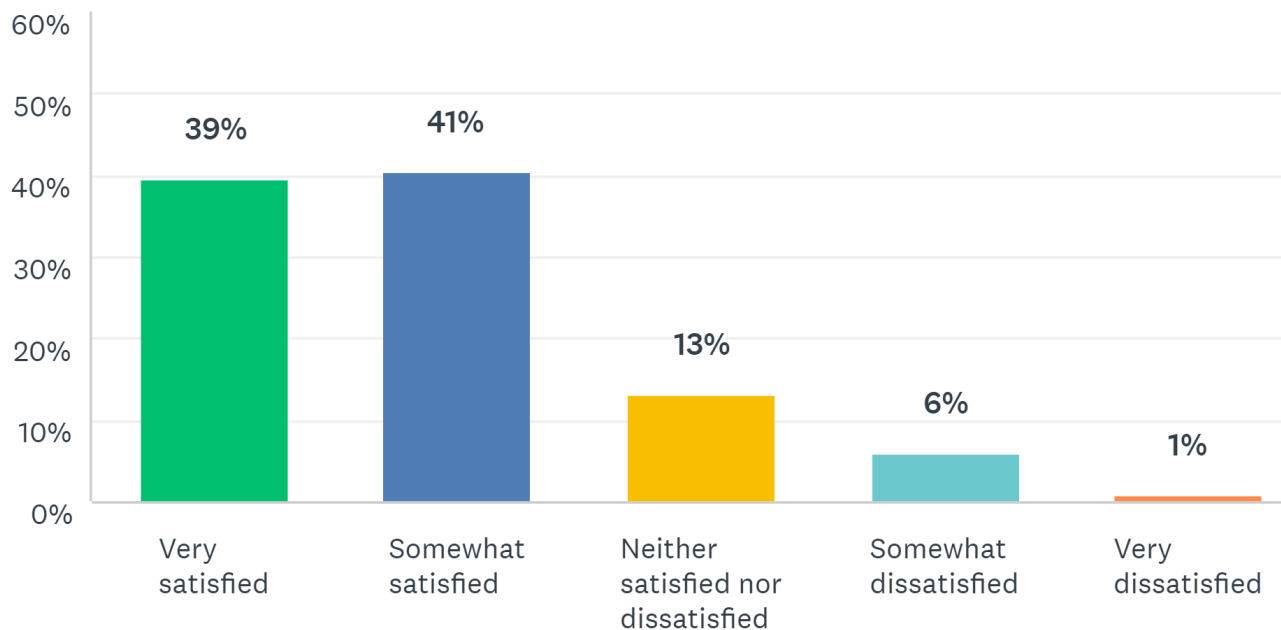
- Add definitions/glossary of terms
- Add something about the role trails play in educating users about the environment, wildlife and culture they are surrounded by
- Provide clarity about motorized and/or human-powered, i.e., clarify Whistler's values
- Clarify that hikers/runners are included here; bias seems to lean toward biking

As with the objectives, a number of respondents were concerned that the statements were ranked in order of priority. *NOTE: The statements are in no particular order, and the intent is to work toward achieving all of the statements, while recognizing that there will sometimes be trade-offs that will need to be considered.*

Section 5: Survey Feedback

Q30: How satisfied are you with this initial survey as a way to provide input to help inform the project planning phase of the RTS?

Answered: 461 / Skipped: 338



Q31: Other than a shorter survey with less content to read 😊, what else would you suggest to improve the next round of engagement?

Answered: 189 / Skipped: 610

Many respondents used the opportunity provided by this question to reiterate their issues and desires related to Whistler's trail system. Those who provided input to help improve the next round of engagement offered these suggestions:

- Provide more opportunity for input about the trail network, including trail types, gaps, difficulty, etc. (Note: The Recreation Trails Strategy will set high level direction for trails in Whistler, but it

is not a detailed trails masterplan, which will come next and will be the opportunity to get into the details of the trails themselves.)

- Simplify the content and the language used so it is easier to understand, considering those for whom English is their second language
- Provide space for support or opposition to what is presented, rather than just adding suggestions. This feedback was provided by respondents for the questions related to the trail topics and the four proposed trails. *(Note: Unfortunately, that type of question essentially becomes a referendum on the topic/trail, which is challenging territory for an online survey that is not statistically valid and representative of the entire community.)*
- Provide more maps and graphical representation of the information.
- Add face to face engagement, either on Zoom or in-person when we can.
- Include direct consultation with stakeholder groups.
- Incentivize participation with a prize of some kind.
- Release more communication about the engagement opportunities *(Note: 799 responses to this survey results in a response rate (based on the permanent population) of 6%, which is very good and amongst the highest of the RMOW's online surveys).*