

C. Trail Access and Staging Guidelines

These trail access and staging guidelines were developed to inform preferred locations, types of staging areas, and additional or enhanced amenities required to fill gaps in the network.

Three categories of staging areas have been established:

- **Designated Staging Area (DSA):** This type features amenities intended to serve destination users and higher use volumes. DSAs provide a strong sense of arrival for guests, a location to share important trail and 'adventure smart' information, and basic services to manage waste. As designated, they are serviced and maintained by a land manager, although the level of maintenance may vary by manager. Municipal examples: Rainbow Lake trailhead on Alta Lake Road, the Whistler Interpretive Forest parking lot at Highway 99 opposite Function Junction.
- **Undesignated Staging Area (USA):** This type includes very few or no amenities and is in undesignated clearings/open spaces. Examples: Cougar Mountain FSR at Highway 99, areas along the Cheakamus Lake FSR within the Whistler Interpretive Forest.
- **Roadside Parking Area (RPA):** This is parking that occurs on municipal roads and along Highway 99. When it occurs in neighbourhoods, it can create challenges for residents, whereas highway parking can introduce safety concerns. Examples: along Alta Lake Road near Nita Lake Drive and Stonebridge Drive to access Sproatt trails, Alpine Meadows neighbourhood roads to access trails like Skywalk and Howler, just south of Function Junction on Highway 99 to access Train Wreck.

Details are presented below, and a table summarizing the details is provided at the end of the section.

Staging Area Location Guidance

Distance and Elevation from Trailhead

Analysis of existing staging areas found the distance and elevation of staging areas relative to trailheads plays an important role in their use, and the type of recreational activity can also affect the use of trail staging areas.

Hikers generally desire a short distance from the staging area to the trailhead, whereas mountain bikers tend to tolerate slightly longer distances due to their speed and ease of travel. Analysis of existing staging areas indicates that roadside parking areas tend to occur where major trailhead access locations are greater than 500 m from a designated or informal staging area and/or when the elevation gain is 50 m or greater.

Staging areas should be located as close to the trailhead as possible. Staging areas for destination hiking trails should be located within 100 m of a trailhead with less than 10m of elevation gain. Staging areas for bike trails should be less than 300m (500m maximum) and with less than 50m elevation gain.

Staging Type

DSAs should be located at or near the trailheads of frequently used destination trails (i.e., where vehicles are typically used for access). They should be easy to get to and ideally serve multiple trails.

USAs are best suited to infrequent use trail areas and places that are unlikely to be served by a DSA.

Roadside parking, subject to municipal regulations, should only be considered when the trails are infrequently used a parking area is not possible, and when the trails are targeting local community users over guests.

Avoidance of Residential Areas

All locations should consider adjacent residential areas. Staging areas should be located on the outskirts of residential areas and ideally be separated by vegetated buffers to minimize potential disturbances.

Trail Difficulty from Staging Areas

Trails leading from DSAs to the network should be easy to access and of a difficulty rating equivalent to the easiest trail in the network. If not, trail users may choose to park elsewhere which may have unintended negative consequences.

Staging Area Amenity Guidance

Designated Staging Areas

The amenities below should be considered for DSAs along with the capacity for servicing and maintenance.

Required amenities:

1. Asphalt or gravel survey for parking to maximize the number of spaces
2. Washroom (serviced/flush, pit toilet, or porta potty)
3. Potable water
4. Information and map kiosk(s)
5. Waste and recycling facilities

Preferred additional amenities:

1. Public transit access
2. Valley trail access
3. Picnic table(s)
2. Invasive species wash facility
3. Bike maintenance

Optional amenities:

1. Changing area
2. Secure lockers for gear
3. Bike racks for hikers using active transportation to access trails
5. Access for food trucks
7. Electric vehicle charging stations as per the Whistler EV Strategy (RMOW, 2022)
8. Bike share station
9. Security access gate

Undesignated Staging Areas

The amenities below should be considered for USAs along with the capacity for servicing and maintenance.

Required Amenities:

- Gravel surface parking
- Information and map Kiosk – Consider if >10 parking spots and moderate to high use area.

Roadside Parking Areas

Amenities will generally not be provided for RSAs; however, there may be situations where managing and monitoring for potential impacts is necessary.

Indicators to monitor include:

- Resident complaint volumes as a direct result of increased recreational users as recorded by Bylaw Services;
- Increased social and environmental impacts through lack of amenities such as washrooms or garbage/recycling receptacles

When repeated negative impacts occur, a gap analysis of staging areas should be triggered to identify the severity of conflict and develop appropriate mitigation measures, potentially considering the development of a USA or DSA.

Mitigation measures could include:

- Increasing roadside parking management including educational signage and enforcement.

- Redirecting parking to a DSA or USA.
- Increased communication and education (encouraging alternative methods of transportation, respectful behavior, direction to preferred parking areas).

Redirecting Parking

Existing parking opportunities not regularly utilized by recreation trail users could provide opportunities to redirect users from high demand or high conflict staging areas. This could include, at appropriate times, parking areas like the Creekside parking garage or school sites as used in Squamish and underutilized municipal parking assets (e.g., select parks and roads). These areas are not currently being used primarily because of the distance/elevation of these amenities from trailheads and the availability of closer staging areas.

Summary of the Trail Access and Staging Guidelines

Considerations	Guideline
Location	Distance to trailhead, generally as near as possible with these provided as guidance: • Less than 100 m for hiking trail users • Less than 200-300 m preferred (500 m max) for mountain bike users • Less than 50m of elevation gain over the above distances
Types	Designated Staging Areas • High use levels • Serves multiple user groups and trailheads/areas • Support destination sites and trails as well as trail network areas • Located to reduce or eliminate negative social and environmental impacts to residential neighbourhoods • Optimized for maintenance and servicing Undesignated Staging Areas • Lower use levels • Located outside of residential areas • Areas not served by a DSA • Users less likely to require amenities to support their activity Roadside Staging Areas • Lowest use levels • Targeting resident users over guests
Residential areas	• Ensure spatial separation to avoid visual and noise related impacts, consider maintaining vegetated buffers when considering DSAs or USAs • Ensure adequate parking restrictions, signage and enforcement, and consider signage and education to encourage respectful behaviour in neighbourhoods
Access Trails	• Provide direct access to trail(s) or network area via connector trails that match lowest rated trails in the area • Construct access trail if necessary to encourage use of DSAs or USAs