Whistler's Recreation Trails Strategy

A GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKING

Community Engagement Summary

Introduction

This document summarizes the community engagement process undertaken and the community feedback received during Phase 2 of the Recreation Trail Strategy (RTS) development process.

RTS Project Overview

The RMOW is leading the development of a non-motorized Recreation Trails Strategy (RTS) that will guide trail and trail-related amenity development, improvement, access, funding, and management. Eight trail topics have been guiding the work and Initial Directions were developed based on background information, a 'force field analysis,' and input from the Trails Planning Working Group, the Whistler Bear Advisory Committee, the Forests and Wildlands Advisory Committee, and the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee.

- 1. Trail Access and Staging Areas
- 2. Environmentally Responsible Trail Planning
- 3. Trail Approval Process
- 4. Unsanctioned Trails

- Commercial and Event Use
 Communications
- 7. Trail Inventory
- 8. Trail Funding

HOW IT'S BEING DEVELOPED



Engagement Overview

Phase 2 of the project culminated with community engagement focused on the Initial Directions and intended to achieve the objectives:

- 1. Gauge support for the RTS Initial Directions
- 2. Gather feedback on the RTS Initial Directions
- 3. Provide an update on the project and communicate next steps

The engagement was conducted between March 23th and April 17th, 2023, and consisted of the opportunities described in the table below. Communication channels used to promote the events occurred between March 21st and April 9th, and were released as follows:

- Whistler Today: March 30
- Mayor's Report: March 21 and April 3
- Social media: March 24, March 30, April 9
- Ads: March 24 & 31

Engagement Opportunity	Description	Number of participants
Online	Staff and the consultants provided an overview of the project, process, trail topics, and Initial Directions and then responded to	8 attended the session
Information Session	questions from participants. The intent of the event was not to gather input – participants were directed to provide input using Engage Whistler and a demonstration of the tool was provided.	19 watched the recording of the session presentation
	The presentation component of the session was recorded so community members who were unable to attend could watch it later.	
Engage	The RTS project page was open for input on the platform	113 'engaged' participants
Whistler online platform	between March 23 rd and April 17. Engagement tools used included the survey, ideas boards, questions, and a quick poll.	303 'informed' participants
	See Appendix A for what was presented on the platform.	See details in Appendix B-D
Pop-up booths	The booths were hosted by staff on three different days at two locations: the Whistler Public Library and Meadow Park Sport Centre (MPSC).	The approximate number of interactions with community members is presented below.
	Posters included information about the project, the RTS topic	Tues 1-3pm (Library): 35
	areas, sample Initial Directions, and instructions for how to provide input.	Wed 3-5pm (MPSC): 25
	A postcard handout was provided as a reminder to community members to visit Engage Whistler once at home. iPad and paper worksheets were also available for people to provide input while at the booth.	Thurs 5-7pm (MPSC): 10
Email	Email input was provided by three community members. Some of their input related to the RTS Initial Directions that were the focus of this phase of engagement and where this was the case, their input has been summarized within the Results Summary section below. Where their feedback was more detailed and beyond the scope of this phase of engagement, that feedback was directed to the appropriate staff.	3

The feedback gathered through the community engagement process (which is presented in this document) will inform the development of the Recreation Trails Strategy and the final recommendations contained within it.

Community Engagement Results Summary

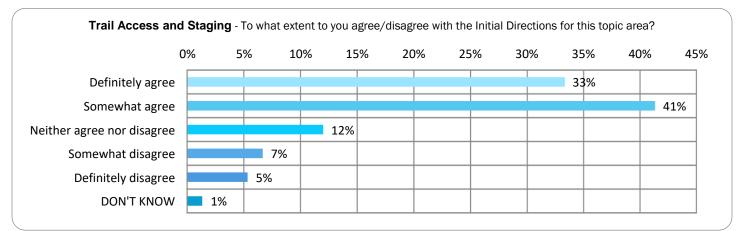
The sections below represent each of the eight trail topics and each one includes the list of Initial Directions, the survey results for each (i.e., participant agreement/disagreement with the Initial Directions), and a summary of any suggestions for changes or additions to the Initial Directions.

Trail Access and Staging Areas

Initial Directions

- 1. Identify and prioritize potential staging area additions and enhancements, considering the analysis, background information, and Trail Access and Staging Guidelines.
- 2. Add required amenities to high-use T2 (Informal) areas (at minimum) to alleviate some negative impacts and make these areas more desirable than T3 (Roadside) parking.
- 3. Encourage use of existing under-utilized parking locations.
- 4. Explore shuttle service options.
- 5. Encourage and plan for the use of active transportation to access the trail network.
- 6. Investigate pay parking solutions and implications for staging areas.

Survey Result



Feedback

There were eight contributors to the Engage Whistler Ideas Board. Four focused on the ensuring white-water kayaker access to rivers is considered in trails planning in Whistler, especially to the Cheakamus River. Other input included the desire for regulation and enforcement of illegal overnight camping and squatting, the suggestion that staging area amenities be kept simple, and appreciation of the RMOW's recognition of the current challenges related to parking in residential areas – and the need for restrictions and enforcement.

Email feedback supported the use of shuttles and suggested that the use of bikes and human-power to access trails for hiking is unlikely due to the extra effort involved and the likelihood of bike theft. Another suggested that easily accessible trailheads are key (including parking that is in close proximity) and that without easy access, those recreating using human-power (hiking and biking instead of ATVs, snowmobiles, motorbikes) will go elsewhere to

find trails that are more easily accessible. Both included detailed lists of some of the hiking areas in the region that are challenging to access; these lists have been referred to staff.

Environmentally Responsible Trail Planning



This topic area had a long list of Initial Directions, so they were divided into four sub-topics, including tool development, communications and promotions, implementation and monitoring, and future improvements/enhancements. These sub-topics were used for the survey input. Conversely, feedback gathered was for the overall topic as a whole. One comment was received via the tool and other input was received via email.

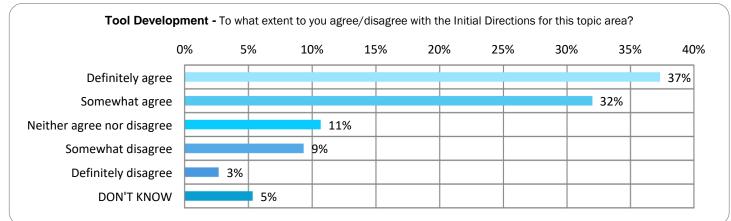
The comment received via the Ideas Board for this topic area focused on the need to bring the existing trail network up to standard so that it can withstand impacts, especially those related to climate change. It suggested the need to be cautious about building new trails until the existing network is more resilient and in compliance with other community priorities, including protecting nature, species, and financial resources.

The email input identified that some confusion exists in the terminology used in the text and tables for this topic, including the following terms: non-motorized multi-use, single-use, mixed-use, multi-use non-motorized, and hikingonly. Further, they suggested that some motorized use seems to be included in the non-motorized category. Lastly, they felt that the technical difficulty ratings seem confusing and might need some rewording to provide clarity.

Initial Directions – Tool Development

1. Develop and implement an environmentally responsible trail planning tool (the ERTP tool) based on the environmentally sensitive area rankings and mitigation strategies and corresponding mapping.

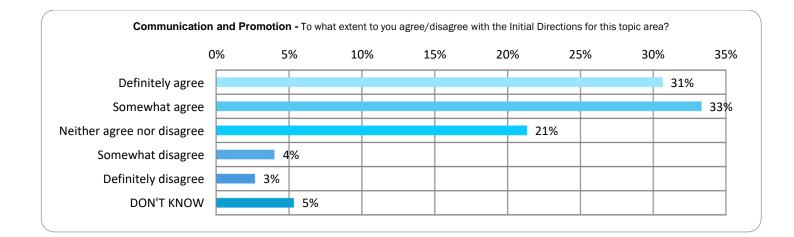
Survey Result



Initial Directions – Communication & Promotion

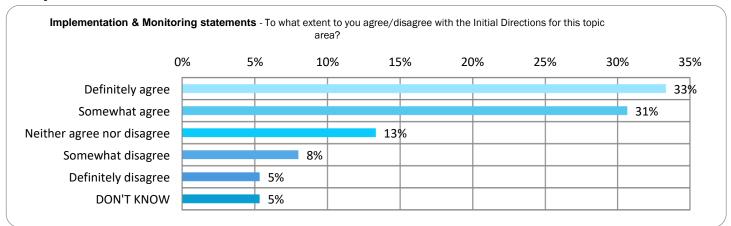
- 2. Promote the use of the ERTP tool to advocacy groups.
- 3. Raise public awareness of the use of the ERTP tool in trail development.

Survey Result



Initial Directions – Implementation & Monitoring

- 4. Update the Whistler Trail Standards (RMOW, 2003) to include the ERTP tool, in addition to current and emerging environmental and trail construction best practices.
- 5. Include relevant ERTP tool details in trail authorization process that includes formalizing the mitigation strategies to ensure they are understood, considered, and implemented during trail planning, construction, and maintenance.
- 6. Develop a strategy/protocol for applying the ERTP tool for effective trail development planning, including process to update data within the GIS online mapping.
- 7. Train appropriate RMOW staff and other trail crew on use of the ERTP tool for planning.
- 8. Maintain up to date spatial information on ESAs and continually review the ESA list and ranking to ensure any new ESAs are identified and ranking amended as required. Future studies and strategies, such as Priority Habitat Management Strategy or input from the public and/or professionals, may identify new environmental values that should be considered.



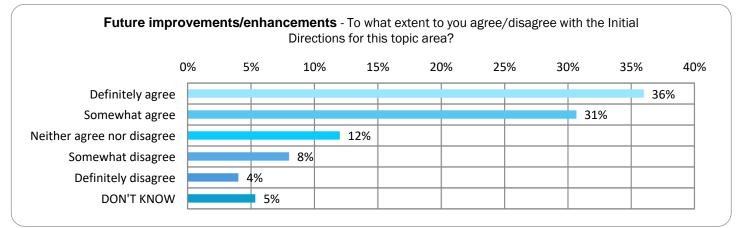
Survey Result

Initial Directions – Future improvements/enhancements

- 9. Develop Mitigation Strategies for invasive species in future trails planning best practices for inclusion in the strategy/protocol for applying the ERTP tool for effective tails development planning.
- 10. Complete an assessment of the trail network against the ERTP tool to inform restoration, mitigation and/or enhanced management systems.
- 11. Consider undertaking further additional grizzly bear habitat mapping study beyond the existing spatial extents where appropriate.

- 12. Consider undertaking a wildlife connectivity study to identify locations and analyze connectivity within the valley to help develop mitigation strategies for inclusion in the ERTP tool.
- 13. Develop a monitoring program for alignment with ERTP tool and potential future Limits of Acceptable Change process. This should consider how maintenance and management tasks should be triggered by monitoring indicators, providing a staged approach to management. This is outside of the scope of the ERTP tool but is recommended for consideration as part of a future master planning process.

Survey Result



Trail Approval Process



Initial Directions

- 1. Review upcoming changes to the provincial authorization process to understand the implications on future trail development proposals and opportunities within Whistler, and address implications as needed.
- 2. Develop a municipal trail development authorization process for reviewing trails within Whistler that aligns with the provincial process regarding environmental review, First Nations consultation, and referrals to appropriate stakeholders. This process would ideally consider and resolve provincial requirements prior to application submission to the Province to decrease review processing time.
- 3. Review and update the terms of reference for the Trail Planning Working Group to include reviewing and commenting on new trail development applications.

	0%	5%	10)%	15%	20%	25%	30	%	35%	40%	45%
Definitely agree	2											449
Somewhat agree	2								31%			
Neither agree nor disagree	2		8%									
Somewhat disagree	2			11%								
Definitely disagree	2 3	\$%										
DON'T KNOW		\$%										

Survey Result

Feedback

There were only two comments related to this topic. One highlighted the need to limit new trails generally for two reasons: being able to afford maintenance of existing trails and to protect natural areas and wildlife species. The other focused on the need to enable general public access to public lands, citing Madely Lake access issues as the example to avoid.

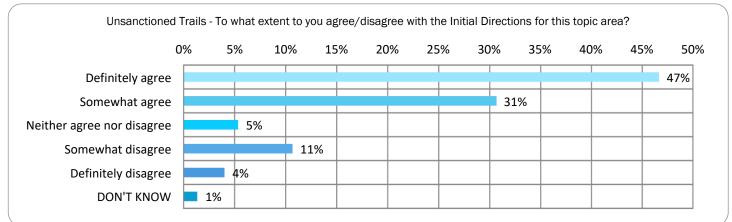
Unsanctioned Trails



Initial Directions

- 1. Communicate through a regular education/ media campaign the potential impacts of unsanctioned trail construction on First Nations, environment, private property and long-term trail development planning.
- 2. Identify in a trails master plan the areas that are suitable for trail construction, and direct trail builders to sanctioned opportunities that immediately engage them.
- 3. Understand the motivations behind unsanctioned trail building and aim to address them within trail master planning.
- 4. Coordinate with the Province regarding upcoming changes to provincial authorization process to understand the implications of authorization and ongoing maintenance of unsanctioned trails.
- 5. Work with the Province to authorize unsanctioned trails that meet provincial standards and municipal guidelines and based on adequate resources to maintain the additional inventory.
- 6. Investigate reports of unsanctioned trail construction quickly to limit negative impacts.

Survey Result



Feedback

None received.

Commercial and Event Use

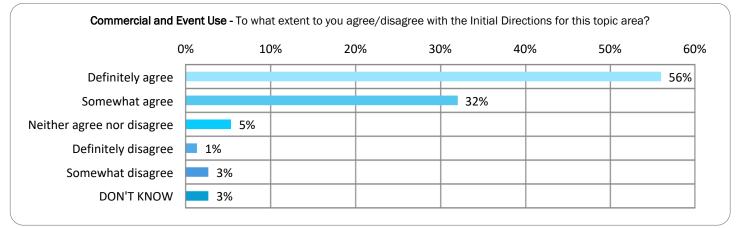
Initial Directions

- 1. Develop a policy and review process for commercial and event use of Whistler's trails in collaboration with stakeholders that:
 - a. Aligns with the vision and objectives of the Recreation Trails Strategy
 - b. Aligns with and builds upon existing related initiatives including the Non-Exclusive Use Permit (NEUP).
 - c. Outlines proponent requirements and evaluation criteria in support of community objectives and related to environmental, trail and social management concerns
 - d. Establishes trail fees for commercial and event users that are clear, consistent, and comparable to other jurisdiction, based on potential impacts to the network.
 - e. Is suitable for the variety of land and trail managers as well as commercial and event proponents in the Whistler area
 - f. Determines acceptable levels of commercial and event use balanced with smart tourism objectives
 - g. Inventories the network in consideration of a broad range of event types and sizes, weather conditions and other unique considerations



- h. Is clear, efficient and streamlined for all parties, defining expectations and requirement
- i. Clearly identifies best practice management systems to monitor and encourage or enforce appropriate use levels
- 2. Develop a guide that helps commercial and event proponents adhere to the policy.

Survey Result



Feedback

Two comments were received. The first was in agreement with the Initial Directions that commercial businesses should pay their fair share for trail use, and further, that the number of days that trails are off limits to the public due to commercial events should be limited. The other comment suggested that public trails should be for public use only and that commercial use should not be permitted at all.

Communications

Initial Directions



- 1. Develop a communication strategy for effectively communicating trail related closures and other announcements to trail users that:
 - a. Are coordinated across land managers and trail groups, identifying who is responsible for what
 - b. Clarifies key messages to ensure users are aware, in advance, of trail openings, closures and other issues, and they understand the importance of respecting closures. Where possible explain why trails are closed and why it's important to respect them would help inform announcements
- 2. Expand the use of on-site information boards (e.g., dry erase) at high-use staging areas or trailheads to reach users who may not be connected to other information channels.

Survey Result

	0%	10%	% 20	9% 30	0% 40	0% 5	60% 60	0%
Definitely agree	2							60
Somewhat agree	2				29%			
Neither agree nor disagree	2	5%						
Somewhat disagree	e 📕 1%							
Definitely disagree	e 📕 1%							
DON'T KNOW	/ 📕 1%]

Feedback

The one comment submitted here recommended that more general education about Whistler trails be included as a topic for ongoing communications, citing these as examples of important information to convey: which organizations are responsible for maintaining which trails and who is responsible for which policies.



Initial Directions

- 1. Continue to utilize trail designs that appeal to a wide range of skill sets (e.g., Flashback in Cheakamus and Chipmunk Rebellion 1&2 in Westside-Sproatt) to maximize sustainability, use across skill levels, and cost effectiveness.
- 2. Analyze and identify opportunities and deficiencies within the network (e.g. types of trails, trails targeting particular user groups, difficulties of trails, connectivity, adaptive, etc.) to inform a master plan.
- 3. Increase the focus on network areas that are appropriate for specific difficulties and skill progression while also enabling connectivity of Trail Network Areas across all skill levels.
- 4. Update the Whistler Trail Standards to include other user type requirements (hiking, trail running, trials moto).
- 5. Consult trials bike stakeholders regarding trails and areas appropriate to consider for authorization.

Trail Inventory - To what extent to you agree/disagree with the Initial Directions for this topic area? 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% Definitely agree 28% Somewhat agree 4% Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree 5% Definitely disagree 1% DON'T KNOW 0%

Survey Result

60%

61%

70%

Two comments were received through the Ideas Board. One requested that motorized/fossil-fuel use of Whistler trails not be permitted based on their incompatibility with other uses given the pollution, smell, speed and impact on trails. The other comment requested that motorbikes (including gas and electric) be included in trail network planning.

Email feedback included specific input related to missing features at the Fitzsimmons skills park. Another individual highlighted hikers' preference for alpine areas and the differences in trail design required to meet the needs/preferences of hikers versus mountain bikers – and the suggestion that 'shared use trails' are not a good idea.

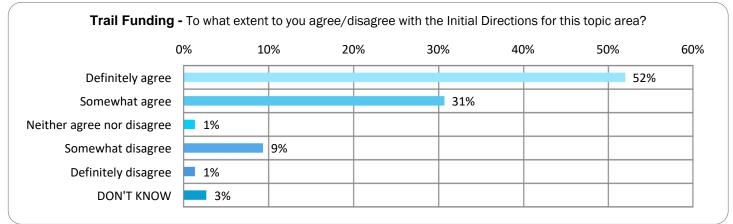
Trail Funding



Initial Directions

- 1. Explore long-term funding models to support for the ongoing maintenance of the trail network.
- 2. Leverage commercial and event use of the trail network to fund trail maintenance and construction. For example, establish a standardized and universal commercial fee program.
- 3. Pursue community amenity contributions from developers to support the trail network where relevant.
- 4. Investigate onsite donation opportunities at key staging areas and trailheads.
- 5. Investigate the economic value of volunteer labor contributed to maintaining the network and develop a risk assessment.

Survey Result



Feedback

Email feedback suggested the need to use RMI funding to support initiatives such as shuttle buses, trail head amenities, trail maintenance, parking, etc. (Staff note/response: RMI funds have been used in recent years to deliver exactly these items. Examples include trailhead parking, toilet, kiosks, and maps – with the Whistler Interpretive Forest, Sea to Sky/Train Wreck and Rainbow Falls/Lake trail access points being examples. More substantial trail repairs and bridge replacements are also funded by the RMI program, as are shuttle services, although to date this has only served the Village and park shuttles.

Appendix A: RTS page content on Engage Whistler

The landing page content of the RTS engagement page on the Engage Whistler platform is presented here.

Recreation Trails Strategy

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Overview

The RMOW is leading the development of a non-motorized Recreation Trails Strategy that will guide direction related to trail and trail-related amenity development, improvement, access, funding, and management.

At this time, Initial Directions are being presented for community feedback, which will be used to inform the development of the Recreation Trails Strategy and the final recommendations contained within it.

The Initial Directions are presented according to the eight topic areas below. They were developed based on background information, a 'force field analysis,' and input from the Trails Planning Working Group, the Whistler Bear Advisory Committee, the Forests and Wildlands Advisory Committee, and the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee. They are included in the Survey and Ideas Boards tabs. For the background information and analysis that informed their development, please see the document links provided.

- 1. Trail Access and Staging Areas
- 2. Environmentally Responsible Trail Planning
- 3. Trail Approval Process
- 4. Unsanctioned Trails
- 5. Commercial and Event Use
- 6. Communications
- 7. Trail Inventory
- 8. Trail Funding

Learn more

- Watch the online information session that was held on Tuesday, March 28th click the video link on the right
 Staff and the consulting team provide information about the project and Initial Directions
- · Visit the RTS project page to learn more about the project objectives, phases, scope, and background.

Provide feedback

We want to hear your feedback on the Initial Directions. Please use the tabs below to engage.

- SURVEY: quickly indicate how supportive or unsupportive you are of the Initial Directions
- IDEA & SUGGESTIONS BOARDS: take more time to give feedback on the Initial Directions (and to view background information and the force field analysis for each of the eight topic areas)
- · QUESTIONS: ask us anything
- · ABOUT YOU: help us understand who is participating

Please note: Ideas that do not contribute to a safe and respectful space for others, or are unrelated to this topic, will be removed. Please review our moderation policy. Do not include any personal information about yourself or others.

This information is being collected by the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) under Section 26 (e) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Your personal information will be collected for the purpose of gathering feedback on the Recreation Trails Strategy. The personal information collected includes your screen name and opinions. Your response will be made public once reviewed and may be included in future reports to Council. By submitting your idea, you consent to your screen name and response being collected by Bang the Table, which stores data on a server located in Canada and provides it to the RMOW. Your personal information will be stored securely by the RMOW and deleted one year after the completion of the project. If you have questions about how your personal information is being collected, used or shared please contact <u>communications@whistler.ca</u>

INITIAL DIRECTIONS SURVEY

IDEA & SUGGESTION BOARDS AS

S ASK US A QUESTION

ABOUT YOU

Mart	in Pardoe
Parks	Planning Manager (MP
Reso	rt Municipality of Whistler
Emai	parksplanning@whistler.ca
Enga	agement Team
Com	nunications Department (ET
Reso	t Municipality of Whistler
Emai	communications@whistler.ca
Topic	Area Backgrounders & Initial Directions
	Trail Access and Staging (458 KB) (pdf
	Environmentally Responsible Trail Planning (480 KB) (pdf)
	Trail Approval Process (201 KB) (pdf)
	Unsanctioned Trails (209 KB) (pdf)
	Commercial and Event Uses (223 KB) (pdf)
	Communications (251 KB) (pdf)
	Trail Inventory.pdf (830 KB) (pdf)
	Trail Inventory - Map1 (draft).pdf (18.3 MB) (pdf)
	TrailFunding.pdf (244 KB) (pdf)
	 Other supporting documents March 28th Public Info Session Presentation (1.31 MB) (pdf)
Vide	os
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Appendix B: Engage Whistler Activity Data

This section presents the RTS community engagement activity data through Engage Whistler platform.

Activity Overview Data

ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS	113		
Engaged Actions Performed	Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Participated in Surveys	4	71	0
Participated in Quick Polls	4	18	0
Asked Questions	1	8	0
Contributed to Ideas	1	9	6

INFORMED PARTICIPANTS	303
Informed Actions Performed	Participants
Viewed a video	19
Downloaded a document	86
Visited Multiple Project Pages	179
Contributed to a tool (engaged)	113

AWARE PARTICIPANTS	802
Visited at least one page	

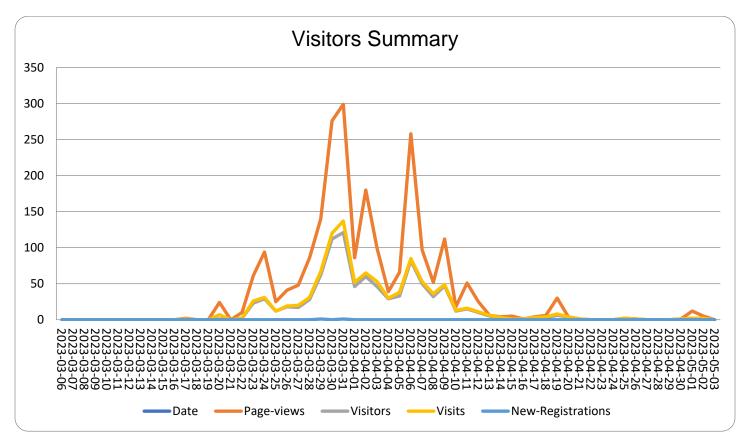
ТооІ Туре	Engagement Tool Name	Visitors	Contributors		
			Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Survey Tool	Initial Directions Survey	234	4	71	0
Ideas Board	Trail Inventory	3	1	1	0
Ideas Board	Commercial and Event Use	3	1	1	0
Ideas Board	Approval Processes	3	1	1	0
Ideas Board	Environmentally Responsible Trail Planning	3	1	0	0

Ideas Board	Trail Access and Staging	37	1	9	6
Ideas Board	Communications	5	0	1	0
QuickPolls	Where do you live?	13	3	10	0
QuickPolls	Which range below includes your age?	20	4	16	0
Q&A	Ask us anything about the project, the Initial Directions, or this engagement opportunity.	25	1	8	0

RTS Document Activity

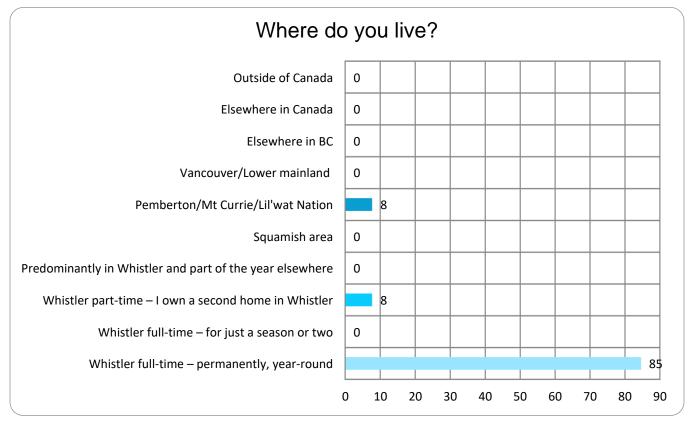
Document Name	Visitors	Downloads/Views
Trail Access and Staging	40	45
Unsanctioned Trails	20	21
Trail Inventory - Map1 (draft).pdf	19	20
Environmentally Responsible Trail Planning	19	22
Trail Inventory.pdf	15	20
TrailFunding.pdf	14	18
March 28th Public Info Session Presentation	9	11
Trail Approval Process	9	10
Commercial and Event Uses	8	9
Communications	5	7
Recreation Trails Strategy Information Meeting	19	19

Visitor Activity Summary by Date



Appendix C: Quick Poll Results – Respondent Demographics

Many respondents provided their location of residence (chart below) while only three provided their date of birth/age (which is not included herein given the extremely low response rate).



Appendix D: Engage Whistler Questions and Answers

Question	Staff Response
How will the RMOW work through NIMBY community member concerns and work on creating solutions that work for the broader population of trail users	The RTS will collect feedback and input from community and stakeholders through multiple platforms and sessions to collect a more complete perspective from our community.
Under the two main topics of Commercial and Event Use and Trail Funding is there a way how the S2S Squamish to Pemberton network (SORCA, WORCA, PVTA, PORCA) can be considered in the solutions package? We all have the same challenges and it would make sense (if possible) to have one working proposal we can all work with.	Great question. The most desirable outcome would be to have a consistent framework for the corridor. It is also probable and understandable that some solutions and directions may differ from one community to another. Engagement and awareness of our neighbors potential directions on this topic would be a valuable addition to the RTS process.
Where does RMOW get data on trail users? I see very few trail counters out in the wild, and Trailforks GPS data also comes with biases towards more experienced users.	The RMOW has multiple infrared and induction trail counters around the valley, these are moved around seasonally and collect reliable user numbers regardless of experience. This is an important program for the RMOW as it helps us understand use and changes over time.
In the Trail Funding topic, one of the initial directions is to "Investigate the economic value of volunteer labor contributed to maintaining the network and develop a risk assessment". What risks are you referring to? Risk of trail maintenance not being done properly by volunteers? Risk that volunteers will hurt themselves while doing work? Risk that opportunities for volunteer trail maintenance will affect the pool of volunteers available for other activities?	Thanks for the question, Ben. The risk is related to the potential loss of volunteers and the financial impacts that would have on the trail network.
It seems to be putting the cart before the horse to proceed with this strategy before there is a master plan for Trail development. Why is there no Trail master plan? How many trails should be built? How many people will these trails serve? How will this number of people be managed with washrooms, traffic, parking, garbage, wildlife interference and on and on. These visions of how and where a trail network should be created need to be answered first don't they??	Thank you for the question. The specific details related to trails that you mention are critical for sure, but they first need guidance to inform them. The RTS is the foundation for how we make decisions about trail development, not what the decisions actually are. Specific decisions such as those you mentioned will be the focus of the Trails Master Plan, the future development of which will be well informed and guided by the RTS.
How/ why do trials bikes get classified as non-motorized, and thereby included in future planning and trail development? These machines are not street legal and must be shuttled to a trail head and they burn gas. It strikes me that any encouragement of an activity that increases emissions is inconsistent with our values.	Observed trials motorcycles are a motorized use and are included in the Recreation Trails Strategy for several reasons: many of today's mountain bike trails originated as trials motorcycle trails, this activity remains active within the study area, and is a source of conflict requiring resolution.
Was there a planned staging area for the Westside Trails (other than the T3 roadside currently on Westside Road/Nita Lake Estates) awhile ago? Before this process of formulating the RTS strategy? Currently there is not enough parking for users.	Thanks for the question. Yes, a staging area off of Alta Lake Road near Nita Lake Drive was contemplated several years back. It did not advance for a variety of reasons, and in part highlighted the need for the RTS and how best to address parking needs at a variety of locations including this one. The Trail Access and Staging Areas background document provides more information in detail on this topic.