

TRAILHEAD CAPACITY ANALYSIS – SURVEY SUMMARY

This summary serves as an overview of findings from six trailhead intercept survey events conducted by SE Group at three popular trailhead locations in Frisco:

- Kayak Parking Lot – County Recpath, Mount Royal trail, and Tenmile Creek access.
- Zach’s Stop Parking Lot – Mount Royal and Rainbow Lake trails; connections to Peaks, Masontown, Hattie’s, and other trails; County Recpath access.
- Dickey’s Day Use Parking Lot– access to County Recpath and various mountain biking, running, and hiking trails.

Along with observational data, the survey was designed to better understand how these trailheads are used and to gauge how much crowding is an issue – for both parking/access and on-trail experience. These findings will inform efforts to better manage use and parking, and to improve overall user experience.

KEY FINDINGS

- As expected, weekends tend to be busier than weekdays at all three locations.
- All three lots and trailheads appear to be nearing capacity on weekends, especially between 8:30-10:30 am. However, crowding and access are not yet critical issues as survey results indicated that recreators can still find legal parking and experience is not negatively impacted.
- The Kayak lot is a popular access point for locals and Colorado residents who want to access the paved Recpath, as well as for some out of state visitors. It is also a popular access point to Tenmile Creek for fishing and the Mount Royal trail (dispersing users between this lot and Zach’s Stop). More formalized parking management may improve parking experience and capacity at this lot. As trails become busier, educational information and signage¹ could increase safety and user experience for sharing the trails among walkers, dog-walkers, families, large groups, bikers, and runners. In particular, speed limits for bikes and directional striping may help manage shared trail use.
- Zach’s Stop is a popular access point for locals, Colorado residents, and out of state visitors alike. Of the three, our surveys indicate that this area sees the most out of state visitation. Clear directional signage for accessing the lot, more formalized parking management, and improved navigational signage on trails could support activity at this site. As these trails become busier, educational information and signage as well as trail improvements, such as widening (specifically Rainbow Lake) could improve user experience for sharing the trails among hikers, dog-walkers, families, mountain bikers, runners, etc.

¹ Educational information and signage should include trail etiquette and any other regulations about allowable or intended uses, dogs, etc.

- The Dickey Day Use lot is a popular access point for more local crowds, primarily serving Summit County residents. This site sees less activity overall than the other sites surveyed and does not appear to be popular or apparent as an option to out of state visitors.
- As new trails become busier, educational information and signage could improve user experience for sharing the trails among mountain bikers, runners, hikers, and dog-walkers. Clear signage about allowed or intended uses for each trail or alternating distinct uses on specific days may improve safety and user experience, especially on narrow singletrack trails.

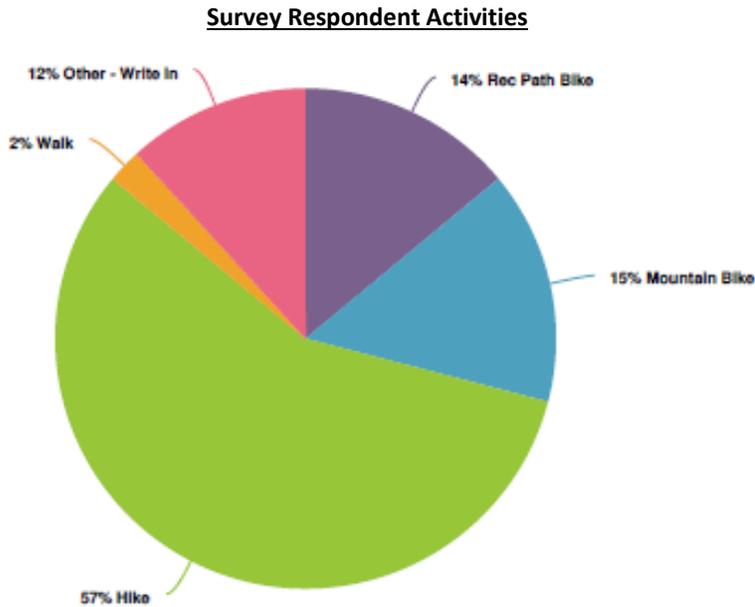
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PLAN

- Trailhead crowding is not yet a critical issue that negatively impacts visitor experience. However, people have different thresholds for what they deem “moderately crowded” or “overcrowded”. Continue to manage expectations through trail and trailhead information and advertising. Ensure that information on popular trail apps and website is up to date (Trailforks, AllTrails, etc.).
- Consistent trailhead signage concerning trail access, parking areas, and allowed uses will help visitors understand how to use the space. Parking space delineation and rock armoring non-parking areas can help encourage appropriate parking. Improved wayfinding and messaging throughout town could help disperse parking pressures and inform visitors that trailheads are just a short walk from virtually anywhere in town.
- Continue to educate about trail etiquette and interacting with different user types. Signs indicating where runners/walkers/bikers should be on the trail can increase visibility and awareness. Work with county and USFS to have similar messaging on Rec Path and other trails and trailheads. Consider user-separated trails in the future on popular trails or trail segments.

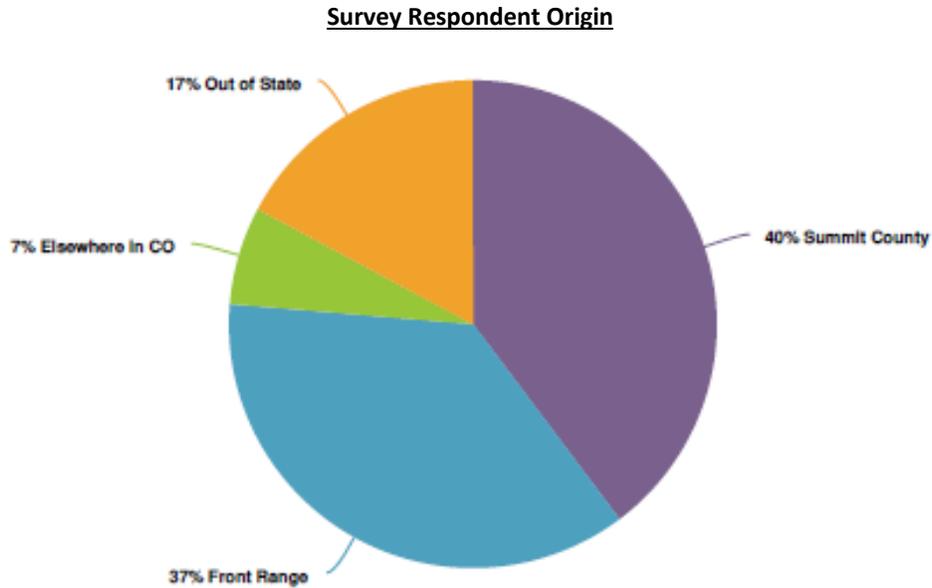
DETAILED FINDINGS

We spoke with 94 groups in total. The Zach’s Stop lot had the most with 45 groups surveyed (48%), followed by the Kayak Lot with 30 groups surveyed (32%), and the Dickey’s Lot with 19 groups surveyed (20%). Across all three sites there was more activity during weekend surveys (68%) than on weekdays (32%). The most common group size across all surveys was two (43%), followed by individuals (20%), groups of four (15%), groups of five or more (14%), and lastly groups of three (8%).

Hiking was the most common activity across all three sites (57%), followed by mountain biking (15%), biking on the paved Recpath (14%), running (7%), flyfishing (4%), and walking on the paved Recpath (2%).

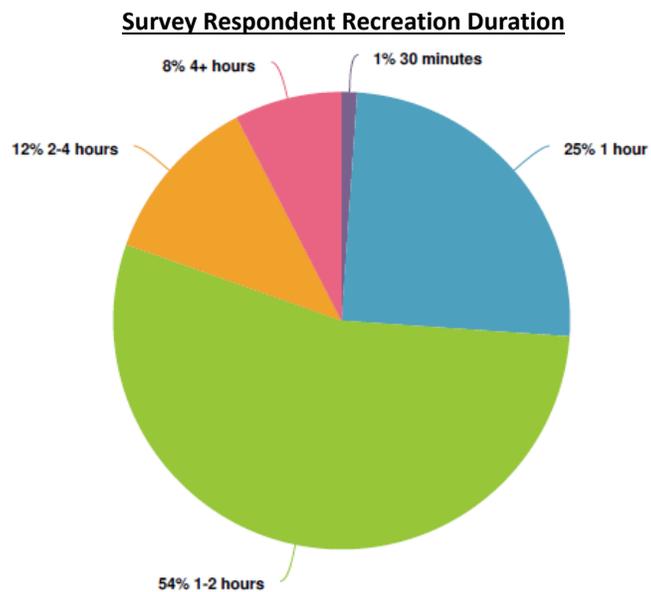


Users coming from Summit County (40%) and Front Range communities (37%) were most common, followed by visitors from out of state (17%), and other Colorado communities (7%). Most out-of-staters were staying in Summit County communities. Unsurprisingly, the share of users coming from Front Range communities was slightly larger on weekends than weekdays.

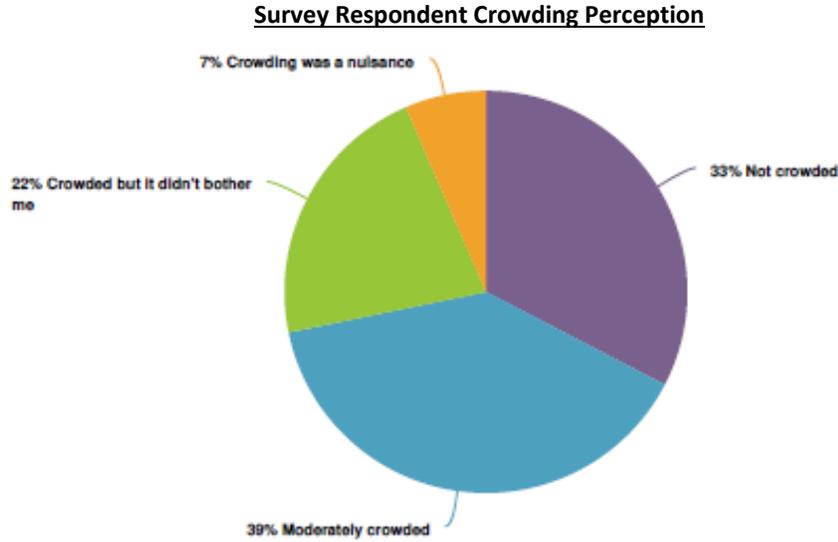


Almost all (97%) groups reported accessing the lot/trailhead by personal vehicle, with three groups walking from their homes or elsewhere in town. It is important to note that we observed a few other runners or bikers leaving the trail and directly exiting the parking lot too quickly for us to stop and speak with, indicating a slight miscount of people accessing these trailheads this way. Three-quarters of respondents rated their experience accessing the trail highly (5 out of 5), including parking. Only six groups rated access and parking lower than 4 out of 5. However, many weekend groups that gave high ratings did note that they felt lucky to have found a spot given that the parking lot was very busy.

Most groups reported spending about 1-2 hours recreating (79%). The vast majority (79%) rated their overall experience highly (5 out of 5).



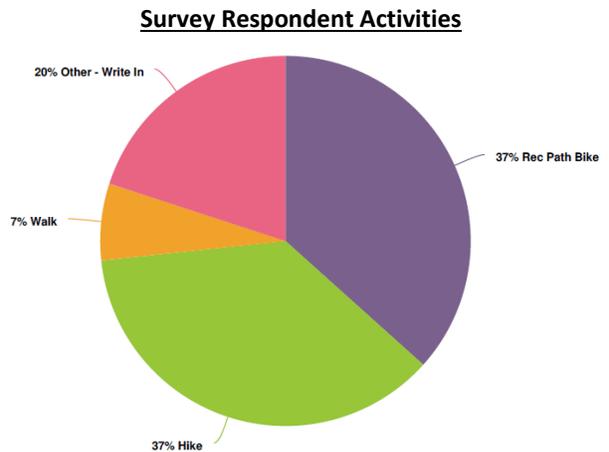
Finally, most groups reported that trails were moderately crowded (40%), followed by those who reported that trails were not crowded (33%). Twenty-two percent reported that trails were quite crowded but that it was not an issue, and just six groups (7%) reported that crowding was a nuisance/issue (weekend only).



Kayak Lot

Thirty groups were surveyed at the Kayak Lot – 22 on the weekend (73%) and 8 during the week (27%). Large groups (5+) were slightly more common at this site than others, representing 20 percent of those surveyed. This is presumably due to the wide Recpath that easily accommodates large groups and potentially the larger parking lot as well.

Biking on the paved Recpath and hiking (Mount Royal) were the most common activities at this site (37% each). Four weekend groups used this lot to access Tenmile Creek for flyfishing and the remaining four groups were walking or running on the Recpath. It is important to note that bikers are sometimes harder to stop as they whiz to their cars. Thus, this user group may be slightly underrepresented.



Forty-seven percent of groups reported traveling from Front Range communities, 37 percent from within Summit County, and 17 percent from out of state.

The majority of groups reported that they were familiar with the area (90%) and that they had visited this location previously (79%). When asked how often they visited this lot, most responded that they came frequently, some weekenders indicating that they usually come on weekdays. When asked if they have noticed any changes over time, many responded that this location has become busier.

When asked how they chose to come to this location, many indicated their familiarity with the lot and trails, easy access off I-70 and to the Recpath, Mt. Royal trail, and Tenmile Creek, and that it's family-friendly. A few people mentioned the option of longer Recpath rides, and one person mentioned that it was a recommendation from a local fly shop.

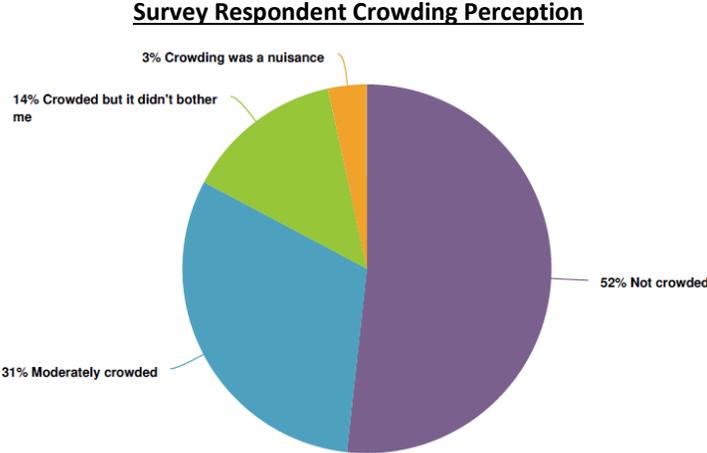
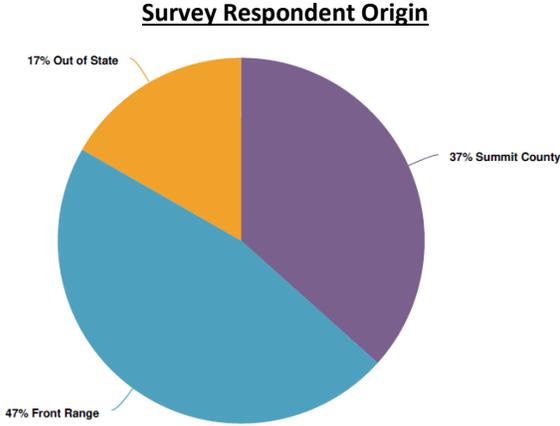
The majority of groups (67%) rated their access and parking experience highly (5 out of 5), with 27 percent giving a rating of 4 out of 5. Just two groups gave a lower score. Several of those who gave a score of 4 or lower indicated that they had to "make up" a potentially illegal parking spot or that they parked elsewhere and walked (1). Many noted that the lot filled quite early. Seventy percent of groups gave their overall experience a rating of 5 out of 5, with the remainder giving a score of 4 out of 5.

The majority of groups reported that the trails were not crowded (52%), followed by those who reported that trails were moderately crowded (31%). Just four groups (14%) indicated that the trails were crowded but a non-issue and just one group reported that crowding was a nuisance/issue. A slightly higher proportion indicated that trails were crowded on the weekend.

During the weekend session there was an event happening on the Recpath, which a few groups mentioned probably impacted their sense of how busy this area was. We observed approximately 80 cars upon arrival at 10 am on the weekend, essentially filling the lot. There was moderate turnover and the lot stayed full, with several cars looping and some leaving when they could not find a spot. During the weekday we observed 50 cars upon arrival at noon, some parked in improvised spots indicating that it may have been busier earlier in the day.

Other comments include:

- Some large groups were difficult to navigate around/spread out on the trail.
- Speed of bikers was sometimes worrisome.



- Bikers seem less knowledgeable.
- Weekends are very busy; regular traffic on weekdays but never too busy.
- Concern about dogs off leash.
- Don't build more parking.
- Porta potties are pretty clean.

Zach's Stop

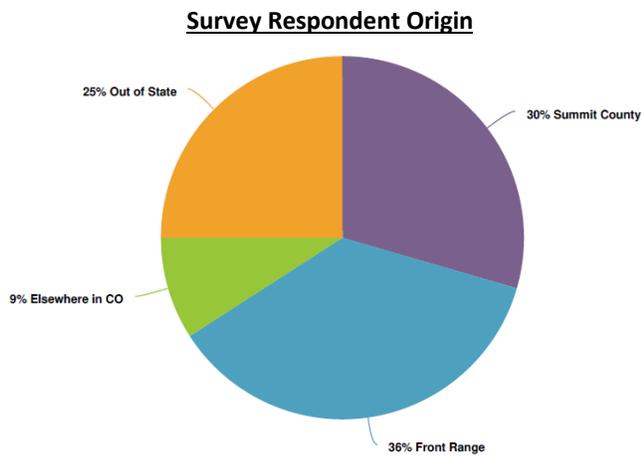
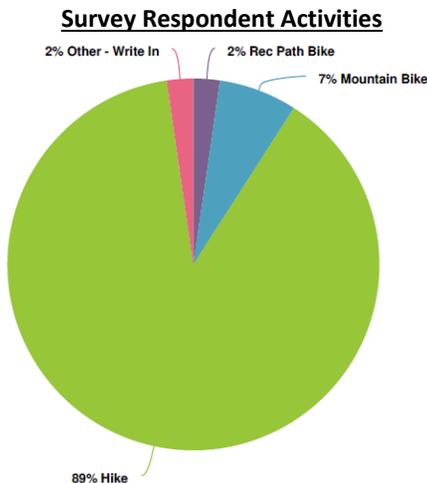
Forty-five groups were surveyed at Zach's Stop – 31 on the weekend (69%) and 14 during the week (31%). Individual users were less common at this site than others, representing just 9 percent of groups surveyed.

Hiking was by far the most common activity at this site (89%), with three mountain biking groups (7%), one runner, and one biker on the paved Recpath (5% total). It is important to note that a few runner/bike groups were harder to stop as they whizzed past. Thus, these user groups may be slightly underrepresented.

Thirty-six percent of groups reported traveling from Front Range communities, 30 percent from within Summit County, 25 percent from out of state, and 9 percent from elsewhere in Colorado. This is a higher proportion of out-of-staters compared to other sites.

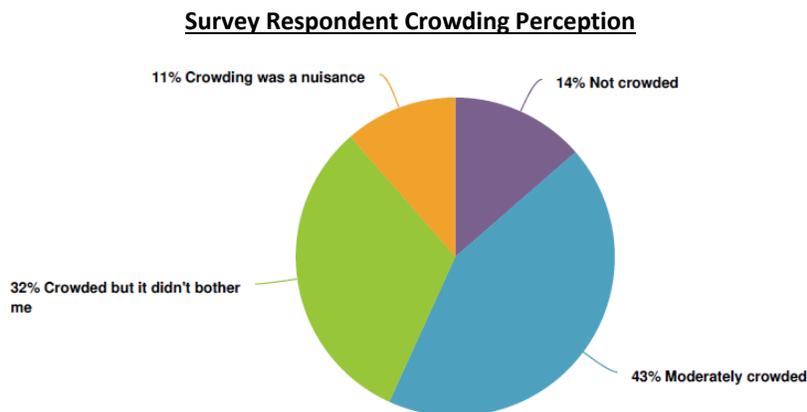
The majority of groups reported that they were familiar with the area (84 percent) while just half reported that they had visited this location previously. This is likely influenced by the higher proportion of users coming from out-of-state, many of which reported that they visit Colorado annually leading to their general familiarity but lower likelihood to have visited this site. Few reported how often they visit but when asked if they'd noticed any changes, respondents largely mentioned the cleared trees and a few mentioned that it's become busier.

When asked how they chose to come to this location, many indicated using apps or online sources (23) including All Trails (14), google search (7), MTB project (3), and COTrex (1). Others indicated their familiarity with the lot and trails, easier/shorter options and family-friendly nature, water access, scenery and wildflowers, and that it's dog-friendly. Three groups reported that this location was recommended by locals or friends and two groups mentioned that they came to this trailhead after finding the Lilypad Lake lot full.



The majority of groups (75%) rated their access and parking experience highly (5 out of 5), with 18 percent giving a rating of 4 out of 5. Just three groups gave a lower score. One group that gave a lower score said they got lost but admitted that they were not using a GPS device, and other groups indicated that parking was a little tough although they were able to find a spot. Another group reported that the lot was hidden and a little hard to find. A few groups that gave high scores indicated that they felt lucky to have gotten a spot. Eighty-two percent of groups gave their overall experience a rating of 5 out of 5, with all but one remaining giving a score of 4 out of 5.

The majority of groups reported that the trails were moderately crowded (43%) or crowded but not an issue (32%). Fourteen percent reported that trails were not crowded, and five groups (11%) reported that trails were so crowded that it was a nuisance/issue – all on the weekend. A slightly higher proportion of groups reported that trails were crowded on the weekend. Several groups indicated that higher concentrations of people were found near Rainbow Lake and that the Mount Royal trail was less crowded. Many groups indicated that, although it was busy, people were polite and good at sharing the trail and managing their dogs.



During both the weekend and weekday cars were parked along the side of the access road leading to the larger parking area by the trailhead. During the weekday we observed 34 cars upon arrival just after noon, leaving few available spaces. Many people came off the trail between noon and 1, opening up more spaces. There were 24 cars upon leaving at 2pm. On the weekend we observed 48 cars upon arrival at 11am, completely filling the lot and a few people parking in the center of the larger parking area. Spots started to open up around 11:30 with 20 cars remaining when we left at 1:30. We observed a few cars circling to find parking within the first hour. Because this lot is less formalized, the number of spaces available partly depends on how people choose to park – how much space is left between cars vs. more compact parking. This led to the lot being almost full during the weekday with just 34 cars but accommodating 48 cars on the weekend.

Other comments include:

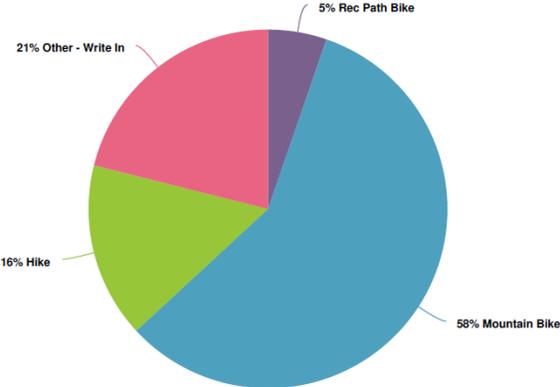
- Don't like all the dogs.
- Portable toilet was full, would rather a permanent bathroom structure.
- Wasn't sure where to get information online.
- Better signage at trail intersections – use consistent and clear trail/destination names.
- Fast bikers feel unsafe.
- Loose boards and nails on boardwalk.

Dickey’s Lot

This site had the lowest number of groups surveyed at 19 – 11 on the weekend and 8 during the weekday. This is not surprising given that the parking area is significantly smaller than the Kayak or Zach’s Stop lots. While two-person groups were still most common at this site (42 percent), individual users (37%) were much more common than other sites, and no groups larger than 4 were surveyed.

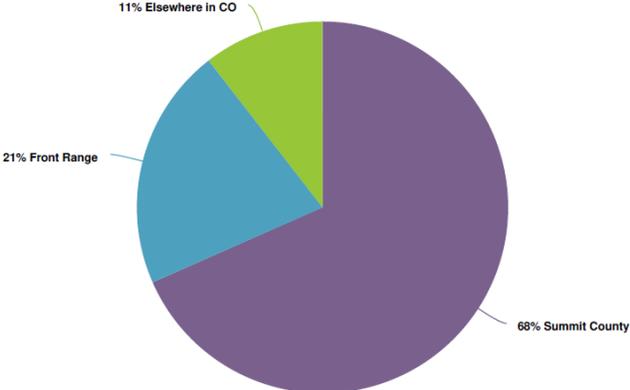
Mountain biking was the most common activity at this site (58%) – not surprising given the supply of single-track trails meant for this use. Runners were also more common at this site (21%), in addition to hikers (16 percent) and one group of paved Recpath bikers (5%) that round out users surveyed. All groups reported spending 1-2 hours recreating at this site, while at least a few groups at other sites reported spending 3+ hours recreating.

Survey Respondent Activities



A much higher share of users at this site reported traveling from within Summit County (68%), 21 percent from Front Range communities, and 11% from other Colorado communities. No groups surveyed were from out of state.

Survey Respondent Origin



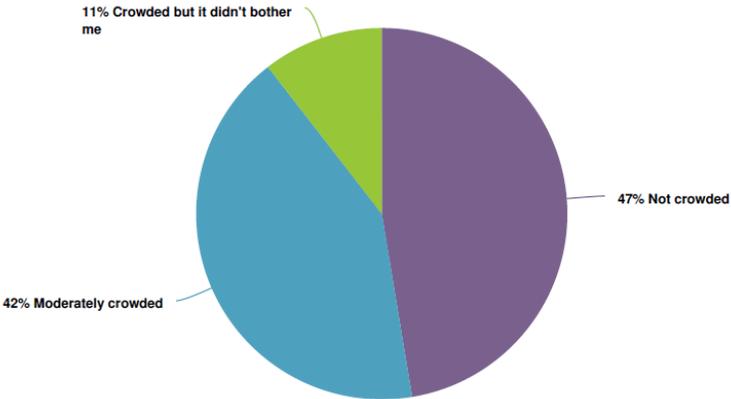
All groups surveyed at this site reported that they were familiar with the area and that they had visited this location previously, not surprising given the higher proportion of Summit County residents and lack of out-of-staters. Many reported that they visit this access point frequently. When asked if they’d noticed any changes over time, many reported how much they love the new trails and improvements to older trails and that it’s become busier.

When asked how they chose to come to this location, many indicated their familiarity with the lot and trails, proximity to home or work, and easy access. Some noted the scenery, the variety of trails, and that the terrain is not too hilly. One person mentioned handicap access.

The majority of groups (90%) rated their access and parking experience highly (5 out of 5). One group gave a rating of 4 out of 5 and one other gave a rating of 3 out of 5, indicating that they snagged the last parking spot and felt that there should be more (weekend). Similarly, 84 percent of groups gave their overall experience a rating of 5 out of 5, with the remainder giving a score of 4 out of 5.

The majority of groups reported that the trails were not crowded (47%) or moderately crowded (42%). Just two weekend groups reported that trails were more crowded but none reported that crowding was a nuisance/issue.

Survey Respondent Crowding Perception



During the weekday, we observed that about a third of parking spots were open upon arrival at noon, but the lot was almost full by 12:30. However, turnover left about half the spots open by the time we left at 1:45. On the weekend we observed that at least 1-2 spots were almost always available after we arrived at 10 and that about half the spots were open by 1 when we left. While we did not survey these groups, we observed many bikers going past on the paved Recpath both on the weekend and during the weekday.

Other comments include:

- The perimeter trail near the campground is a little unclear; better signage here would help.
- Many bikers on trails and only some use proper trail etiquette/let you know they are coming.
- Several people who indicated low or moderately crowded trails and parking lot gave the caveat that they have experienced busier times, that they were lucky to get a spot, or that they try to avoid the busier trails (Recpath).
- Rocky trails.
- Don't love all the e-bikes.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Three consultants from SE Group split survey administration at the three identified locations, with one person staffing each event. We aimed for 2-3 hours for each session with timing somewhat dependent on weather and pace of activity. During the busier weekend sessions, we were not able to speak with every group that came off the trail so survey numbers do not reflect all users during each session.

Because three individuals administered the surveys and took observations, there is some variability in approach that may have impacted findings.

Location	Date	Time
Zach's	July 13 (Wed.)	12:00 – 2:00 pm
Kayak	July 16 (Sat.)	10:30 am – 1:30 pm
Dickey's	July 16 (Sat.)	10:30 am – 1:30 pm
Kayak	July 21 (Th.)	12:00 – 2:00 pm
Dickey's	July 21 (Th.)	12:00 – 2:00 pm
Zach's	July 23 (Sat.)	11:00 am – 1:30 pm

Groups were approached and asked a series of 13 questions. Responses were recorded by hand on pre-prepared paper survey sheets. Additional observations were noted. In some cases, one representative would answer for an entire group while in others several people would contribute, working together to come up with collective responses. A blank survey form is attached at the end of this summary for reference. A few notes about how we interpreted responses are laid out below.

Question 2: When asked where people were traveling from, there were many instances where members of the group were from different locales. In this case, we prioritized individuals who lived closest. For example, a group that included one visitor from out of state and one Summit County resident we counted as a Summit County entry.

Questions 5 & 7: Similarly, when asked if people were familiar with the area or had visited the site before, we prioritized local knowledge and experience, assuming that this contributed to the reasoning for choosing that trailhead. If one person had visited the site, but others hadn't, we counted this as an instance of prior visitation.

Upon completing all sessions, survey responses were entered into Alchemer – an online survey manager and analyst tool. Multiple-choice, scale-based, and yes or no questions were then automatically summarized in charts and tables. Additional comments were reviewed and summarized along with administrator observations.

SURVEY FORM

Location _____ Date _____	
<p>What was your activity today?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rec Path Bike <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Bike <input type="checkbox"/> Hike <input type="checkbox"/> Walk <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>If other: _____</p>	<p>Rate your experience accessing and parking at this site.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Difficult Excellent</p> <p>Explain: _____</p>
<p>Where are you coming from today?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Summit City <input type="checkbox"/> Front Range <input type="checkbox"/> Elsewhere in CO <input type="checkbox"/> Out of State</p>	<p>About how much time did you spend on the trail/recreating today?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 30 mins <input type="checkbox"/> 1 hour <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 4+ hours</p>
<p>How many people are in your group?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5+</p>	<p>Rate your overall experience today</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>Disappointing Exceptional</p>
<p>How did you get here today?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bike <input type="checkbox"/> Walk <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> Bus <input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <p>If other: _____</p>	<p>Did your experience meet your expectations?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Explain: _____</p>
<p>Are you familiar with the area?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>In your opinion, how busy was the trail today? Was crowding an issue?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not crowded <input type="checkbox"/> moderately crowded <input type="checkbox"/> crowded but didn't bother me <input type="checkbox"/> crowding was a nuisance</p>
<p>How did you decide to come to this trailhead/area today?</p>	
<p>Have you visited this trail/area before?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If Yes, how often? _____</p>	
<p>If you've visited before, have you noticed any changes or differences from your experience today/over time?</p>	