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Feb 3, 2021

Mike Maughan
General Manager
Alta Ski Lifts

Dear Mike,

You've requested that the town council and/or I, as mayor, support your plan to expand parking in three parking areas by 220 parking places. As you have learned, the town council does not appear inclined to support this plan. I am writing to share my thoughts about how I could support it.

First, the problem needs to be more clearly stated and better documented. Alta Ski Lifts (ASL) says that on busy days it is turning away customers that otherwise would be able to park in its lots on the USFS Special Use Permitted ski area parking areas. But even if as many as 200 spaces are occupied early in the morning by back country skiers and cabin owners, how much opportunity cost does that really represent? This is not a simple problem and simply counting cars at 8:00 in the Grizzly lot does not seem sufficient to document the issue. A more careful calculation could be done. ASL could count the number of days this occurs and the number of vehicles, account for the occupancy of the vehicles, subtract the season pass holders who would not be spending new dollars to ski even if they were to ride the lifts, and account for the departure of back country skiers or residents before the end of the day and the subsequent occupancy of the space by later arriving customers. In addition, more clarity could be developed about who does and who does not count as a customer so ASL can determine the magnitude of the problem. For example, does Kevin, who arrives at 8, and then hikes to the Emma ridgeline and skis in Big Cottonwood Canyon until noon and departs, count as a customer? If not, does he become a customer if he goes into the Albion Grill for a sandwich? For a cup of coffee? Does Jill, who has a season pass, and who arrives early, takes two back country runs, and then meets her friend Lauren, who also has a pass, who drives her kids and Jill's kids to an ASL youth ski program and then skis with Jill in the Twin Lakes area count as a customer? If not, do Jill and Lauren count as customers if they meet their kids at 3:15 and then take a couple of runs with them on Sunnyside? Does a cabin owner who parks in the Grizzly lot and then rides the lift using his season pass and skis to his cabin count as a customer?

Second, alternative approaches could be pursued. I recommend that everything possible be done to maximize parking on ASL's existing lots. Increased efficiency in the use of ASL's existing parking lots would provide assurance that currently available parking space is not being wasted. ASL could charge for parking, which would encourage people to carpool and would create a revenue stream

for ASL. ASL could require its employees not to bring private vehicles to Alta. ASL could create a parking reservation system or valet parking. Once these measures were tried, and a residual, well-documented problem were to occur or continue, ASL will have a much better argument for parking lot expansion on public land.

I note that even if all spaces on the SUP were occupied by customers of the ASL, on busy days ASL would still be turning many people away under current management plans, as has been acknowledged by ASL. I am guessing that this problem is more serious for customer relations and business strategy than the question of some of the SUP parking areas being occupied by non-customers. I have numerous friends and colleagues who have given up skiing in Little Cottonwood Canyon, for example, because of the traffic and congestion. There is much more demand for parking in Alta than there is supply and this problem is only going to get worse.

Finally, Town Administrator John Guldner points out that ASL has expanded its facilities, with the approval of the USFS, but not its parking. If the Town of Alta had been the jurisdictional authority for those expansions, we would have required additional parking to be built as a condition of approval. Our estimate of the shortfall is 50 spaces, and consistent with John's recommendation, I support the creation of that many additional parking places for residents and employees of these facilities.

I hope this note provides a clear explanation of my current thoughts on ASL's proposal to expand parking.

Sincerely,

Harris

Harris Sondak
Mayor
Town of Alta