

3D. PARKING AND TRAFFIC

SCOPE OF ANALYSIS

The scope of this parking and traffic analysis focuses on available parking at Teton Pass as well as Highway 22 traffic, both east and west of Teton Pass. Traffic along the Moose Wilson Road, and parking at Teton Village, associated with utilization of the Rock Springs-Jensen Canyon area was not identified as an issue and therefore is not included within the scope of this analysis.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Backcountry skiing on Teton Pass is accessed via State Highway 22 from locations east and west of the Pass.

Parking

Refer to figures 1-3 and 2-2 for specific locations of existing parking areas. Currently, backcountry skiers typically park in three different areas when utilizing Teton Pass.¹ The primary parking area is atop Teton Pass along the southern shoulder of Highway 22. This area is designed to accommodate 35 vehicles, but during peak days it is common for up to 100 vehicles to be parked at one time. The other parking areas are located east of Teton Pass. The Phillips Canyon/Ski Lake parking area is designed to accommodate 12 vehicles and is located on the south side of Highway 22, approximately one-eighth of a mile east of the Phillips Canyon Trailhead. The Trail Creek Trailhead has a design capacity of 20 vehicles and is accessed off of Highway 22 (approximately five miles west of Wilson) and then traveling approximately one mile on Old Pass Road. Of the three parking areas, the Teton Pass parking area is the most utilized and congested. This parking area presents management challenges for the Forest Service as peak day/weekend utilization of this area has increased substantially in the recent past.

As detailed within the Recreation Section of this analysis, JHMR's guided backcountry activities at Teton Pass are currently limited to no more than 50 annual service days. JHMR has historically only utilized a small portion of its allotted days at Teton Pass. However, when JHMR does occasionally guide in the Teton Pass area, a shuttle bus is utilized to transport patrons to the top of the Pass and between runs. This bus typically does not occupy any of the available parking capacity at the Teton Pass parking area except to make brief pickups/dropoffs. At the end of the day, the shuttle may wait while guides and clients make their final trip out of the backcountry. Finally, the Phillips Canyon/Ski Lake parking area is used by JHMR for drop off/pick up, with no parking spaces actually being consumed throughout the day. The combination of JHMR's

¹ In addition, it is common practice for backcountry skiers to also park in Wilson (west of Teton Pass) and carpool in groups to high elevation parking areas. Survey data does not exist for this parking area, and was therefore not included in this analysis.

infrequent utilization of the Teton Pass area, and their effective use of a shuttle bus has caused very little, if any, contribution to parking congestion at Teton Pass.

Between 1994 and 2003, the Forest Service conducted parking surveys for the Teton Pass and Phillips Canyon/Ski Lake parking areas. Additionally, surveys were completed between 2001 and 2003 for the Trail Creek Trailhead. Table 3D-1 provides data on “average at-one-time” and winter seasonal (approximately December through March) parking for all three of these parking areas.

**Table 3D-1
Backcountry Skiing-Related Parking at Teton Pass**

		1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Phillips Canyon/ Ski Lake	Average At-One-Time Vehicle Count ^a	3.1	6.5	3	3.1	4.3	2.3	4.1	4.4	3.4
	<i>Estimated Winter Seasonal Vehicles Parked^b</i>	694	1,456	672	694	963	515	928	992	768
Teton Pass	Average At-One-Time Vehicle Count ^a	14.9	18.4	14.6	19	22	10.3	16.9	19.3	24.3
	<i>Estimated Winter Seasonal Vehicles Parked^b</i>	3,338	4,122	3,270	4,256	4,928	2,307	3,776	4,320	5,440
Trail Creek Trailhead	Average At-One-Time Vehicle Count ^a	N/A	5.4	3.8						
	<i>Estimated Winter Seasonal Vehicles Parked^b</i>	N/A	1,152	848						
Total Estimated Winter Seasonal Vehicles		4,032	5,578	3,942	4,950	5,891	2,822	4,704	6,464	7,056

Source: Jackson Ranger District, October 2003

N/A = Not available

^a Average at-one-time vehicle counts for each parking area take into account both weekend and weekday counts, utilizing the following formula: (weekend average x 2) + (weekday average x 5) / 7 days.

^b The Forest Service assumes that, in most cases, each vehicle parking for backcountry skiing makes two trips up and down the Pass. Therefore, estimated winter seasonal vehicle counts were calculated by the following formula: (Average at-one-time parking count x 2)/(7 days)(16 weeks).

Traffic

State Highway 22 is a two-lane paved road maintained by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT). Raw traffic data that is collected by WYDOT is processed

and converted to Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes. AADT is defined as the total volume of traffic on a road segment for one year, divided by 365 days. Both directions of traffic volumes are combined and included. AADT can be adjusted to compensate for monthly and daily fluctuations in traffic; the basic intent being to provide traffic volumes that best approximate the use of a given highway section for an average day.

While historic traffic volume data for Highway 22 around the immediate Teton Pass area is somewhat limited, it was collected in 2002 on two sections of the highway that are meaningful in understanding traffic volumes surrounding Teton Pass. These sections include: 1) between the CTNF boundary and the Wyoming-Idaho border (an approximate 6.5-mile stretch west of Teton Pass); and 2) between the CTNF boundary and BTNF boundary (an approximate four-mile stretch east of Teton Pass). AADT data for 2002 indicates approximately 4,100 and 4,270 vehicles to the west and east of Teton Pass, respectively.

East of Teton Pass, AADT data has been historically collected at two locations along Highway 22 – Jackson West and Wilson West.² AADT data provided in Table 3D-2 indicates that traffic volumes on Highway 22 tend to decrease substantially traveling west from Jackson, through Wilson, to Teton Pass. This is likely attributed to a substantial number of vehicles turning north onto Moose Wilson Road to access JHMR.

**Table 3D-2
Average Annual Daily Traffic for
Highway 22**

Year	Jackson West ^a	Wilson West ^b
	AADT	AADT
1996	12,020	2,763
1997	12,816	3,040
1998	13,482	3,224
1999	14,097	3,680
2000	14,819	3,860
2001	15,161	4,105
2002	15,235	4,249
2003	15,416	4,298

Source: Wyoming Department of Transportation, 2004

^a Traffic recorder located approximately three miles west of Jackson

^b Traffic recorder located approximately two miles west of Wilson

² Between 1996 and 2003, the AADT for Jackson West averaged 12.5 percent of the Highway’s Design Hourly Volume (DHV). For the same period, AADT for Wilson West averaged 14.7 percent of the Highway’s DHV.

Vehicle counts for the three parking areas provided in Table 3D-1 provide a good indication of backcountry skier-related traffic on Teton Pass. As can be surmised from comparing the *Total Estimated Winter Seasonal Vehicles* in Table 3D-1 with AADT for corresponding years (Wilson West) in Table 3D-2, the contribution that backcountry skiers have historically made to seasonal traffic flows on Highway 22 are inconsequential. For example, converting Wilson West AADT for 2003 to a four month total,³ (representative of total traffic between December and March) a total of 481,376 vehicles are calculated to have traveled over Teton Pass. During roughly the same time period, approximately 7,056 backcountry skier vehicles are estimated to have traveled on Teton Pass, representing approximately 1.5 percent of this four month total.

AADT data can be converted to Average Daily Traffic (ADT) counts, which are useful in analyzing seasonal or monthly traffic patterns on a specified section of road. Two ADT counts are periodically generated by WYDOT for Highway 22, approximately three miles west of Jackson (Jackson West) and approximately two miles west of Wilson (Wilson West). Year 2003 ADT data for these two locations indicates that ADT on Highway 22 peaked between June and September, with the highest months being July and August. This most likely reflects the popularity of the Jackson Hole area in the summer due to its close proximity to Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Direct and Indirect Effects

Assumptions Common to all Alternatives

Under all alternatives, it is assumed that winter utilization of the Teton Pass, Phillips Canyon/Ski Lake and Trail Creek Trailhead parking areas will increase as backcountry skiing in the Teton Pass area continues to gain in popularity. It is assumed that future increases in winter utilization of Teton Pass will primarily be a function of non-guided backcountry skier use.

ADT for Highway 22 is expected to continue to be significantly higher during the summer months (June through September) than winter due to the close proximity of Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks to Jackson.

Alternative 1 – No Action

Parking

JHMR's guided backcountry services have not quantifiably contributed to issues with parking congestion at any of the three parking areas that are utilized by backcountry skiers for the Teton Pass area. Therefore, selection of the No Action Alternative would not improve parking issues at any of these lots.

³ 4,298 x 7 days x 16 weeks

Traffic

Traffic patterns on Highway 22 would be unaffected by the selection of the No Action Alternative.

Alternative 2 – The Proposed Action

Selection and implementation of the Proposed Action would not change JHMR's allocated use on Teton Pass – annual service days apportioned to JHMR would remain capped at 50.

Parking

It is unlikely that JHMR would utilize all 50 of their annual service days under the Proposed Action. Because 50 service days per season on Teton Pass would amount to approximately ten shuttle buses per season (based on groups of five) operating between the top and bottom of Teton Pass, JHMR's potential annual contribution to parking congestion would be inconsequential.

Traffic

The Proposed Action does not have potential to affect traffic patterns on Highway 22.

Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, JHMR would not conduct any guiding activities in the Teton Pass or Phillips Canyon/Ski Lake areas. Potential issues related to parking and traffic from implementation of Alternative 3 are assumed to be identical to the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects

During summer 2004, the Forest Service is planning to reconfigure the Trail Creek Trailhead by adding a turnaround. While this project is not intended to expand the available parking capacity, and will primarily benefit summer users of the trailhead (allowing for vehicles with trailers to better utilize the area), it will benefit winter users as well by adding another level of organization to the parking configuration. Two goals will be achieved with this project: 1) Teton County will be able to plow further up the road (to the gate), thereby allowing/defining additional winter parking; and 2) it will improve access to private residences in the vicinity of the trailhead by reducing the potential for blocked driveways.

WYDOT has allocated funds to begin a NEPA analysis of reconstruction of Highway 22 through Wilson and along Moose Wilson Road (Highway 390) between Mile Post 4 and Teton Village. While still in the preliminary stages of planning, these reconstruction projects would likely entail addressing issues associated with the structure, surface and width of the road. NEPA on these projects would likely not begin until summer 2004, with implementation not likely until 2011.

In addition, WYDOT recently completed a NEPA analysis which approved overlay and guardrail projects for Highway 22 between Wilson and the Idaho border. This includes ITS (Intelligent Transportation System) technology along Highway 22, which would provide for electronic signage, web cameras, improved lighting and temperature sensors. These projects are slated for construction in fiscal year 2005.⁴

Cumulatively, these projects have potential to improve both safety and traffic flow on highways 22 and 390.

⁴ Hallsten 2004