

Mount Douglas Park

Access Study 2016

Summary Report

November 14, 2016



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1.1 Acknowledgements

The **Mount Douglas Park Access Study Report**; prepared by Saanich Parks staff with substantial contributions from Saanich Engineering, the Saanich Fire Department and our Project Advisory Team (PAT). PAT was comprised of Saanich Staff and members of the public represented by Saanich Recreation/Walking Groups, Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, Recreation Integration Victoria, Blenkinsop Valley Community Association, Cordova Bay Association for Community Affairs, Gordon Head Residents' Association, Saanich Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Citizen Canine and Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition.

Our thanks to our Project Advisory Team!

Saanich Recreation/Walking Group - Robert Newell
Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society - Claude Maurice
Recreation Integration Victoria - Doug Nutting
Blenkinsop Valley Community Association - Earl Hannan
Cordova Bay Association for Community Affairs - Graham Shorthill
Gordon Head Residents' Association - Barbara Tabata
Saanich Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee - Darrell Wick
Citizen Canine - Mark Hawkes
Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition - Alex Nagelbach
Saanich Parks - Gary Darrah
Saanich Parks - Mike Goldsworthy
Saanich Engineering - Troy McKay
Saanich Fire - Brock Hensen

Thank you to the many Saanich residents who participated in the Online Public Survey, the Public Open House and those who provided feedback from the Open House.



1.2 Background

Parking restrictions along Glendenning Road leading into Mount Douglas Park were phased in through 2015. These restrictions followed discussions with the Blenkinsop Valley Community Association regarding concerns about damage to the adjacent Glendenning trail and tree roots along the west side of the road. Further investigation led to concerns regarding public safety vehicle access, resulting in the restrictions that are currently in place.

Council heard from a number of park users that the restrictions affect negatively on their access to and experience in the park. On February 15, 2016, Parks staff requested Council endorse a methodology to develop options to address access to Mount Douglas Park as outlined in the report dated February 5, 2016.

Council Motion from February 15, 2016:

“That Council endorse the methodology to develop options to address access to Mount Douglas Park as outlined in the report dated February 5, 2016 from the Director of Parks and Recreation, with the added amendment that such options should attempt to minimize impact to the special nature, character and experience that access routes themselves provide to users of the park.”

The following information summarizes the study and the recommendations that were the direct result of the community engagement process throughout the summer of 2016.

1.3 Project Objectives

A comprehensive study to develop options for improving the community’s access to key trails and facilities in the Park.

1.4 Key Considerations

- Modes of access:
 - cycling
 - pedestrian
 - transit
 - vehicular
- Trail network and associated trail difficulty ratings

1.5 Focus of the Study

One of the primary components of the study was to examine parking patterns and how park users get to, and access the Park. The Access Study is not a park management plan, a concept plan or a masterplan for the park. It is anticipated that the District will embark on a Park Management Plan for the Park in the next few years. This Access Study will provide important base information for the management plan.

2.0 Project Scope

- The Access Study included examining the following aspects of the Park.
 - Inventory of parking capacity (Appendix 8.1)
 - Inventory of access points including trail difficulty ratings (Appendix 8.2)
 - Transit stop locations (Appendix 8.2)
 - Bicycle facilities
 - Pedestrian facilities
- One portion of the community engagement component of the project involved the formation of a Project Advisory Team (PAT) to act as an advisory body during the course of the Park Access Study at Mount Douglas Park. The team consisted of Saanich Staff (Parks, Engineering, Fire) and members of the following stakeholder groups.
 - Gordon Head Residents' Association
 - Blenkinsop Valley Community Association
 - Cordova Bay Association for Community Affairs
 - Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society
 - Recreation Integration Victoria
 - Saanich Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
 - Citizen Canine
 - Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition
- Presentations of findings to:
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (October 20, 2016)
 - Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee (October 25, 2016)
 - Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee (October 27, 2016)
 - Council (November 28, 2016)

2.1 Key Project Components

- Compile inventory of existing parking capacity in and around the park.
- Conduct public online surveys.
- Traffic study to include data collection and time analysis for the current parking situation during peak season use.
- Map access points into the park including trail difficulty ratings.
- Develop options to address parking and other forms of park access.
- Include a detailed traffic study in the peak season conducted by a qualified consultant.
- Engage the community (Public Open House on October 12, 2016) and key stakeholders including creating an advisory working group.
- Study timeframe - 9 months (data collection undertaken during summer peak use).
- Provide recommendations and options to Council in November.

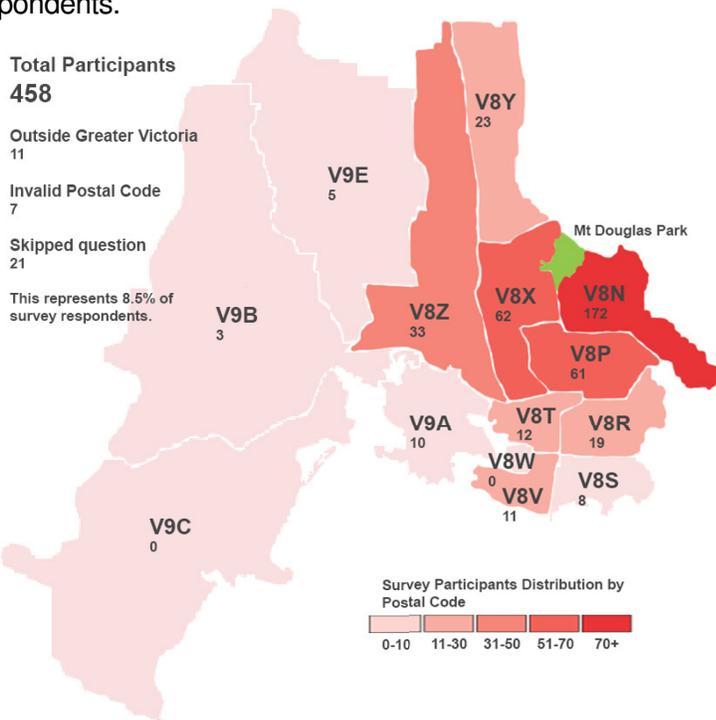
3.0 Community Engagement and Research

The community engagement and research phase for the Access Study included a Public Online Survey, the formation of a Project Advisory Team, external professional assistance, a Public Open House and a second online survey to collect feedback for the recommendations presented at the Open House.

3.1 Park Use and Access Online Survey

The purpose of the initial Public Online Survey was to help the District understand when the park is being used most frequently, how visitors get to the park and what types of activities are most popular for park users. The information collected would be used to make recommendations for how to improve access to key destinations in the Park. The survey asked a series of general questions about park use and then more specific questions about transportation to and from the park. The complete results of the survey is in Appendix 8.5.

Response to the survey was excellent and captured mostly local residents. The survey ran from July 1, 2016 through Aug 31, 2016 and garnered 458 responses. District staff used signs in the park, social media, direct email and ads in the Saanich News to promote the survey. The map below shows the general distribution of respondents.



Summer 2016 Public Online Survey Participant Distribution Map

The Project Advisory Team (PAT) met three times over the course of the project and provided valuable information and direction from a variety of viewpoints. Their mandate was to act as an advisory body during the course of the Park Access Study. Agendas and minutes of the meetings are in Appendix 8.4.

3.2 Consultant Research

In June 2016, the District retained Urban Systems to conduct a parking and access review of the six parking areas at Mount Douglas Park. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how parking demands change throughout the day on both weekends and weekdays during peak summer months (i.e. June, July, August). The number of park users opting to park in undesignated or illegal parking areas to access Mount Douglas Park was also assessed. This analysis was used to establish a baseline understanding of parking situation at Mount Douglas Park in order to make recommendations on infrastructure or access improvements required to increase the ability of people to utilize alternative modes of transportation to access the park (i.e. cycling, walking, transit, etc.).

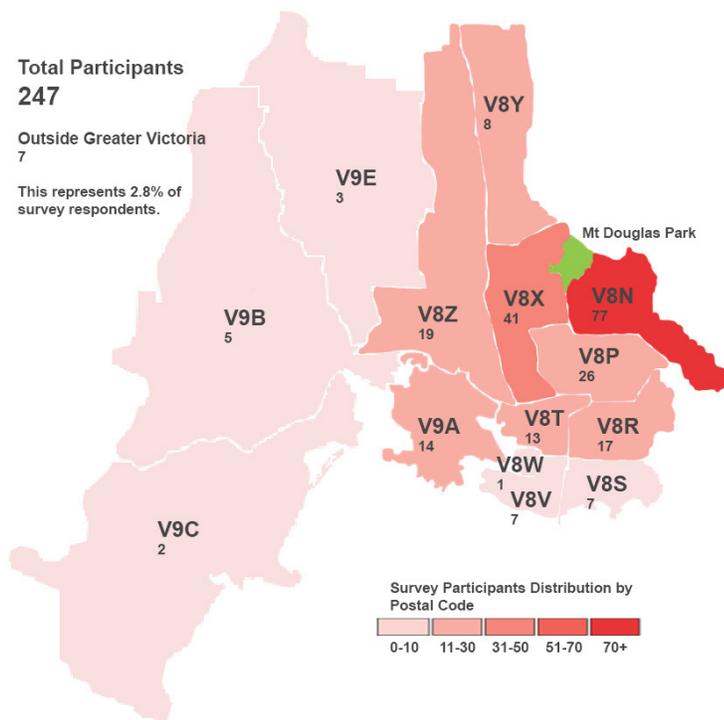
Further, this study also provided a high-level review of bike parking demand by counting the number of bikes using existing bike racks or bikes secured at various entrances to the Park.

The Urban Systems report outlines findings and recommendations from the study as well the methodology used to collect and analyze the parking data. Their full report is included in Appendix 8.3.

3.3 Open House and Feedback Survey

On October 12, 2016 at the Gordon Head Middle School, the District hosted a public open house to display the results of the summer public online survey, the consultant’s research results and to ask for feedback on the proposed recommendations to improve access to the Park. Forty-three individuals attended the event that was promoted much the same way as the summer survey. The open house presentation boards were also posted on the Saanich website and included a link to the online feedback survey. This survey collected 247 responses. The Presentation boards and the full results of the feedback survey are included in Appendix 8.6 and 8.7 for reference.

The recommendations and associated results follow in section 5.0.



Open House Feedback Survey Participant Distribution Map



4.0 Key Findings

Throughout the process, the District heard and observed a number of key messages. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Almost 70% of respondents to our summer survey were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the vehicle parking facilities in the Park.
- Overwhelmingly, more than 80% of park visitors generally spend 1-2 hours at the park.
- The number one choice for parking is the Churchill Drive parking area, followed by the Beach parking area, with Glendenning parking area a close 3rd.
- Glendenning (5 spaces) and Churchill (28 spaces) lots were consistently the locations most likely to be considered at full capacity.
- 72% of survey respondents generally did not support converting existing parkland for parking at Mount Douglas Park.
- 76% of open house respondents supported adding a few additional parallel parking spaces where space permits on Glendenning.
- Turnover analysis of the parking study supports the survey finding that the majority of park visitors stay for less than 2 hours.
- Weekdays were the busiest in the evening.
- Weekends tended to be busiest in the early afternoon.
- Overall, parking facilities in Mount Douglas Park are generally sufficient (i.e.<85% occupancy), however, there is room for improvement and opportunities to expand parking availability in key locations.



5.0 Recommendations

Throughout the study timeframe, staff formulated and refined a number of recommendations based on what was heard and observed throughout the community engagement process.

Grouped by mode of transport to the park, the recommendations are displayed in order of their level of support as indicated in the Open House Feedback results. The survey asked for a level of support on a 1-4 scale with 1 being no support to 4 being strongly support. (The support indicator number is derived from adding the #3 and #4 ratings together and are rounded to the nearest full percent).

5.1 Pedestrian Recommendations

- 84% Consider improving pedestrian connections to trails across major roadways within the park.*
- 80% Create effective signs to alert drivers about speed limits, pedestrians and cyclists on Churchill Drive.
- 69% Review speed of traffic on roads through the park and consider calming measures if warranted.
- 63% Look into upgrading the Douglas Trail from Ash Road to Shelbourne to a “Green” or easy trail.
- 60% Explore improving existing undeveloped park access points around the park (eg. Woodcrest Place).
- 55% Look at ways to remove barriers to easy access.

* Parks staff recommend referring this item to the Active Transportation Plan.

5.2 Cycling Recommendations

- 75% Create effective signs to alert drivers about speed limits, pedestrians and cyclists on Churchill Drive.
- 74% Consider adding bikelanes on Cedar Hill Road between Shelbourne Street and Ash Road.*
- 74% Provide additional bike racks at key trail entrances.
- 67% Review speed of traffic on roads through the park and consider calming measures if warranted.*
- 66% Improve promotion/marketing of bike rack locations in park maps and brochures.

* Parks staff recommend referring this item to the Active Transportation Plan.

5.3 Transit Recommendations

- 75% Saanich to relay concerns to BC Transit.
- 72% Move transit stops closer to the Park.
- 71% Improve Park trails to transit stops
- 69% Provide shelters where possible.

5.4 Vehicular Recommendations

- 81% Consider Blenkinsop Road shoulder/sidewalk improvements between Mercer Trail and Blenkinsop Trail.*
- 76% Consider adding a few additional parallel parking spaces where space permits on Glendenning near the trail entrance and relocate and improve the road side trail as required ensure emergency vehicle access is retained.
- 76% Improve entrance/exit to Beach parking area complete with pedestrian and bicycle facilities to make safer transitions to the remainder of the Park.*
- 70% Install more information signs about alternate parking areas.
- 67% Formalize undesignated spaces in Beach parking area and include handicap stalls while not adding more asphalt.
- 67% Review R/W Agreements with Park neighbours to obtain access.
- 65% Complete Churchill Drive entrance improvements.
- 59% To protect the Douglas Creek tributary and improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, consider limiting parking on Cedar Hill Road to select areas.
- 47% Consider Summit parking/amenities improvements.
- 35% Consider adding time restrictions in popular areas to encourage more turnover. For example a 2hr max. at Glendenning parking area.

* Parks staff recommend referring this item to the Active Transportation Plan project.

6.0 Opportunities

The study showed overall that parking facilities in Mount Douglas Park are generally sufficient (i.e. <85% occupancy), however, there is room for improvement and opportunities to expand parking availability in key locations.

The public feedback and observations made at the Glendenning Trail Head parking area are mixed and not plainly apparent of what should be done at this entrance to the Park. The demand for parking in this area is high as the trails in this part of the Park lend themselves to a flat easy walk. There is an opportunity to provide some parking given the available space along the west side of the road; however, the road is narrow and has a rural character with mature trees that deserve to be protected. There is also a need to ensure emergency vehicle access is not compromised.

In addition, it should be noted that the Park also offers similar flat easy walks on trails such as the Maddock Trail (accessible from the Cedar Hill Road parking area), the Churchill Trail and the Douglas Trail (accessible from the Beach parking area).

In the past, the District has heard via the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and confirmed through this process that the Beach parking area would be better utilized if it were easier and safer to get from the east side of the park to the trails and amenities on the west side. The 76% support for our recommendation to improve entrance/exit to Beach parking area complete with pedestrian and bicycle facilities to make safer transitions to the remainder of the Park would suggest a significant change in this area is warranted and supported in the community. When combined with the 84% support for the recommendation to consider improving pedestrian connections to trails across major roadways within the park, the change can have a significant impact on the way the park functions in the future.

As these recommendations would largely be contained within the road allowances of Cordova Bay Road, Ash Road and Cedar Hill Road, collaborating with Engineering is critical to the success of this initiative.

Options for what this could look like would take some time to prepare but might include exploring the idea of a round-about at the entrance to the Beach parking area along with some other crosswalk improvements on Cordova Bay Road and Ash Road.

This idea could help to alleviate many of the concerns expressed by both the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and Park users. Concerns such as:

- Pedestrian safety
- Cyclist safety
- Vehicle speeds through the Park
- Vehicular movements entering and exiting the Beach parking area
- Transit stop locations

Preliminary examination of this idea presents itself as feasible and when combined with completing the bike lanes on Cedar Hill Road makes for a complete project.

7.0 Future Considerations

Support for the many recommendations is evident in our community. Some of the recommendations are simple and easily implemented; others are complicated and have significant financial impacts. These would need further investigation and be added to future Capital plans where appropriate.

A number of recommendations are referred to the Active Transportation plan that is currently in the early stages of development. Most of these recommendations fall within the municipal road allowance and require Saanich Engineering involvement and lead.

Mount Douglas Park

Access Study 2016

Appendices

- 8.1 Existing Parking Inventory
- 8.2 Map of Access Points and Trail Difficulty Rating
- 8.3 Urban Systems Research and Report
- 8.4 Project Advisory Team Meeting Agendas and Minutes
- 8.5 Results of the Online Public Survey
- 8.6 Open House Presentation Panels
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