

# SR-14 AND DOG MOUNTAIN CONGESTION AND SAFETY PLAN

## Online Open House 1 – Comment Summary

Updated: 2/9/2021

### INTRODUCTION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is partnering with the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to develop a congestion and safety plan for Washington State Route 14 (SR 14) and the Dog Mountain Trailhead. As part of developing this plan, the agencies are conducting a public involvement process to gain input from stakeholders in the area.

### SURVEY SUMMARY

In winter of 2021, these agencies conducted an online open house with an accompanying survey to educate the public about the existing conditions of the project area and get their feedback on needs and deficiencies in the corridor. The survey was open from January 8 to February 1, 2021, and asked participants about their travel patterns in and goals and concerns for the project area. The survey received 42 responses. The results of this survey are not statistically representative, meaning the respondent sample is not predictive of the opinions of any specific community. This report summarizes the comments collected from community members using the survey.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### *SR 14 Travel Patterns and Concerns*

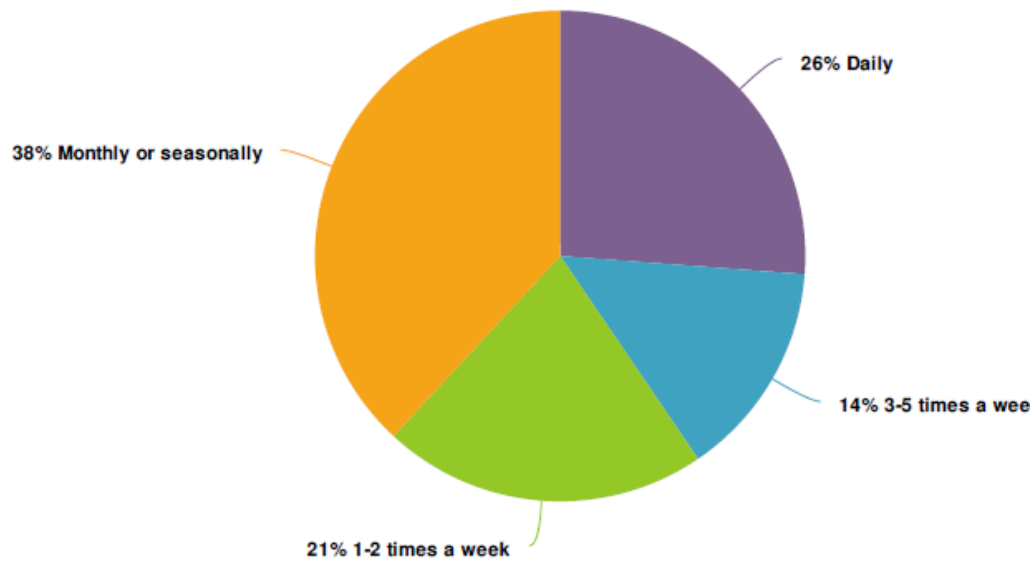
- Most respondents (55%) use the corridor for recreation. The second most common use is commuting (38%).
- Respondents thought the most important goals of the Safety and Congestion Plan were improving safety, protecting resources and managing congestion.
- Respondents noted a variety of safety concerns in the corridor including congestion, unsafe passing, unsafe/illegal parking, rockfall, large trucks and unsafe speeds.
- The sites in the corridor that respondents visit most are Beacon Rock, Cape Horn, Dog Mountain and Catherine Creek.
- Respondents provided several specific suggestions to improving safety and congestion in the corridor including suggestions on parking infrastructure and alternative transportation. These are discussed below in the detailed question summary.

#### *Dog Mountain Trail Access and Congestion*

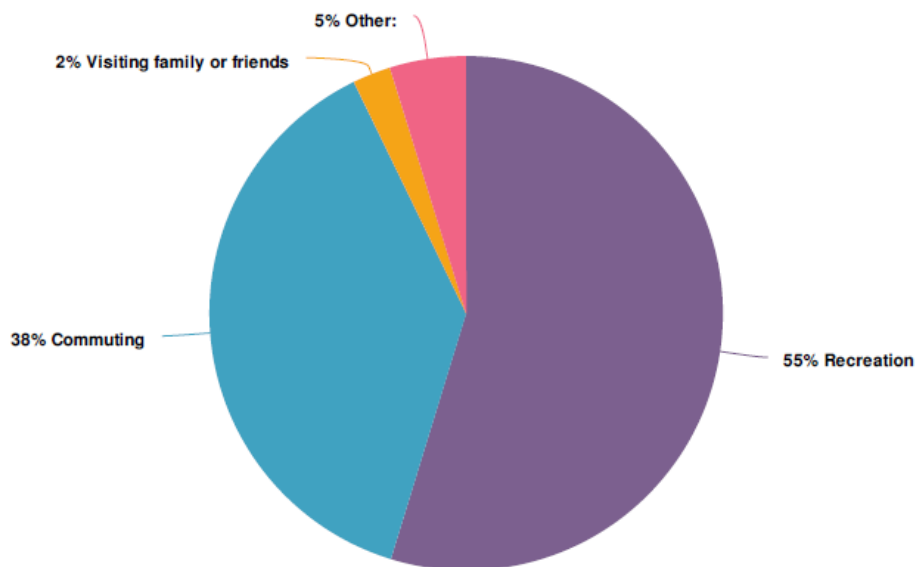
- Respondents are concerned with both parking congestion and hiker congestion at Dog Mountain Trail. They suggested several potential solutions including adding parking in various locations near the hike, expanding the permit system, expanding shuttle access and/or encouraging visitors to do other hikes.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES BY QUESTION

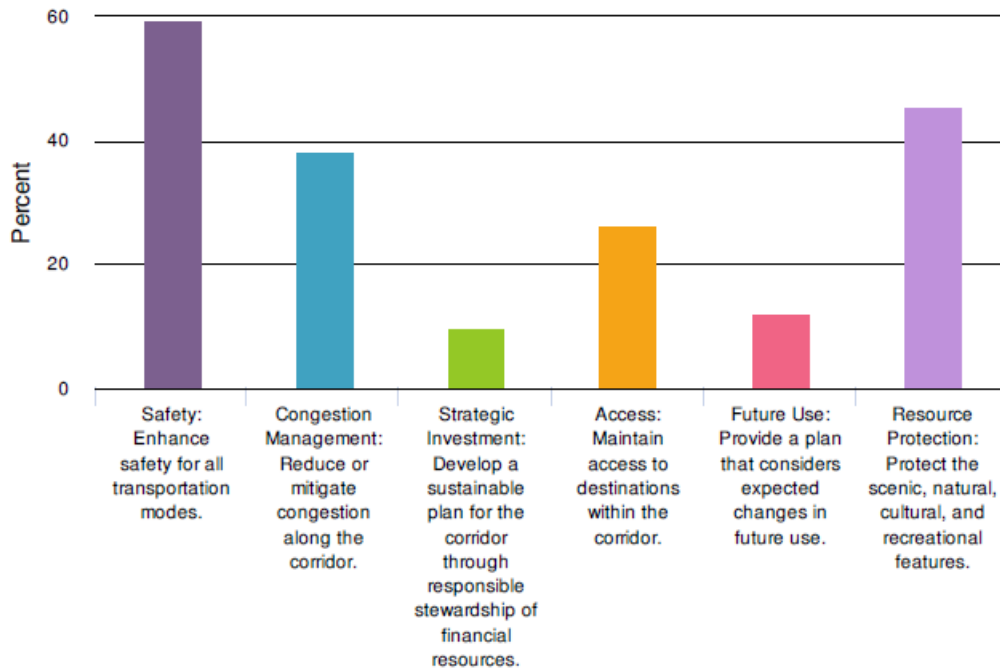
**Question 1: How often do you travel on SR 14 within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area? (n = 42)**



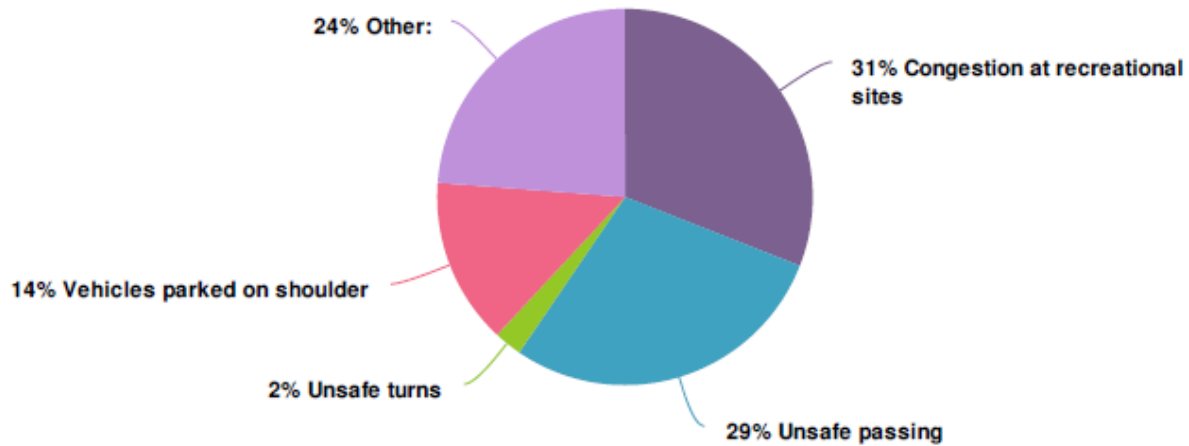
**Question 2: What do you consider your primary use of the corridor? (n = 42)**



**Question 3: Of the plan goals, select the top two most important to you. (n = 42)**



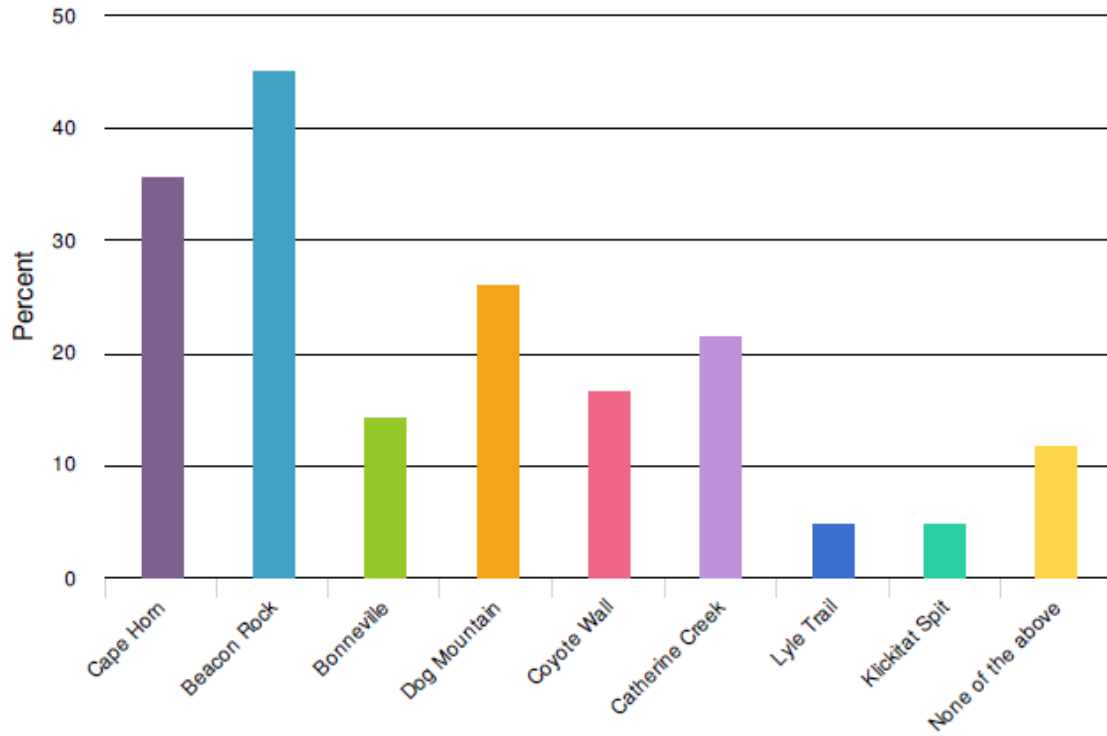
**Question 4: What is the biggest safety concern you experience along the SR 14 corridor? (n = 42)**



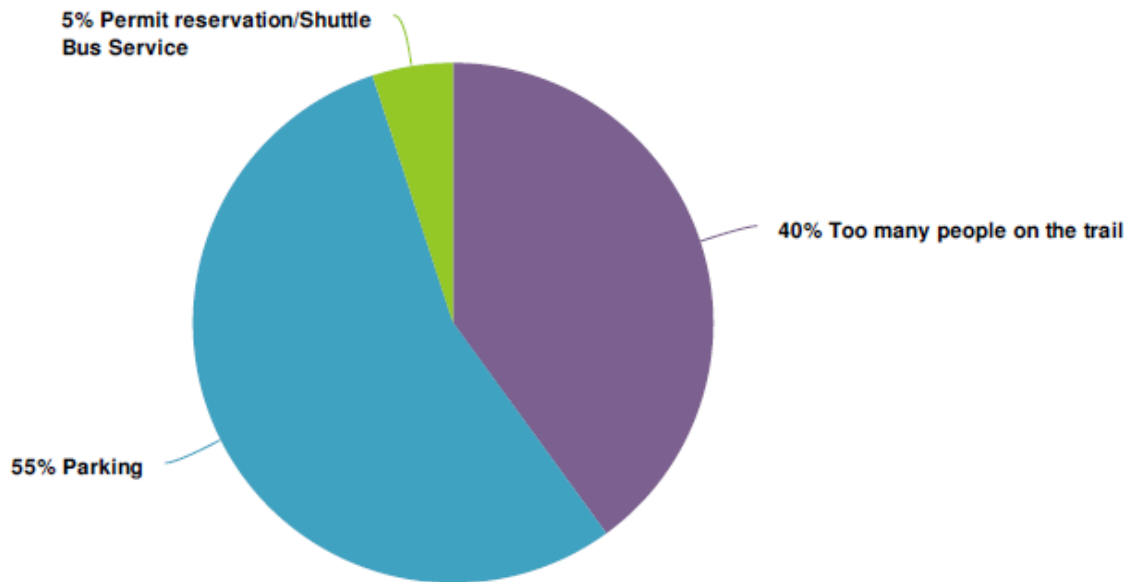
Participants who choose “Other” were given the chance to write in an answer. The most cited safety concerns were:

- Large trucks crossing the center line (especially in tunnels).
- Rockfall.
- Narrow lanes at Cape Horn.
- Pedestrians walking on the shoulder (especially after parking illegally to access trails).
- Vehicles travelling too fast or slow for road conditions or congestion.

5. Which recreation sites do you visit most frequently? Please select up to two. (n = 42)



Question 6: What is your primary concern with the Dog Mountain Trail system? (n = 40)

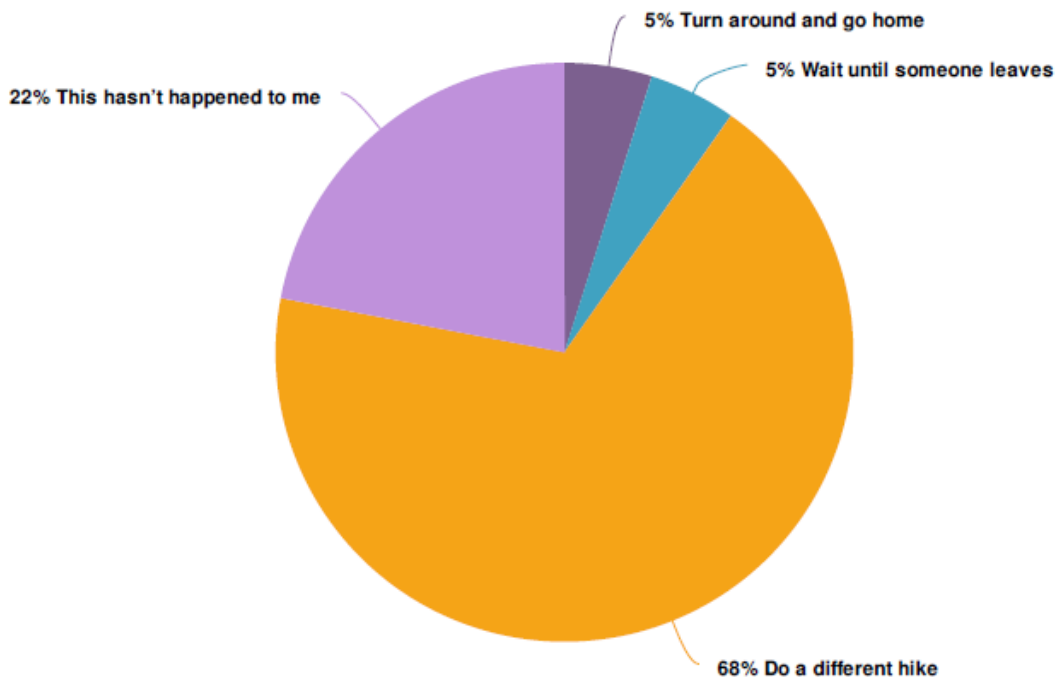


**Question 7: Where would you propose alternate parking or trail access to the Dog Mountain trail system? (n = 15)**

This was an open-ended answer where respondents could write in their thoughts. The most common suggestions were:

- A park and ride with a shuttle from Stevenson, the Troutdale Outlet Mall and/or Bingen.
- Rather than expanding parking, access to the trail should be limited (potentially through user fees for visitors who do not reside in Skamania County).
- Rearrange the parking lot to accommodate more spots, but do not add additional parking elsewhere (limited parking prevents overuse of the trail).
- Adding a parking lot at Grant Lake and rerouting or adding a spur trail to that lot.
- Purchasing the property on the south side of SR 14 and adding a parking lot there.
- Adding a parking lot to the west of the current parking area with access to the trail via an old logging road.
- Adding a parking lot on the west side of Dog Mountain off Bergen Road.
- Creating a marked exit point in the parking lot to help with short sight lines from SR 14 into the lot.

**Question 8. If you cannot find parking at the Dog Mountain Trailhead parking lot, you would: (n = 41)**



### **Question 9: Is there anything else you'd like to share? (n = 20)**

Respondents provided the following comments to this open-ended question:

#### *SR 14 Safety and Congestion*

- Respondents suggested that alternative transportation solutions such as increased transit and bike infrastructure are necessary to reduce congestion in the corridor.
- Respondents noted congestion and parking issues at several other sites along SR 14:
  - A respondent noted congestion issues at Lower Falls Creek Trail and suggested re-opening the parking lot at the Upper Falls.
  - A respondent noted a need for more parking at Cape Horn Trailhead.
  - A respondent suggested that more parking enforcement was needed to discourage visitors from parking on residential streets.
  - Respondents noted the need for safe parking and access to Klickitat Spit/Klickitat Sand Bar since it is one of the few safe launches in the Gorge for beginning kitesurfers.
- A respondent is concerned about the impact of the train and highway on wildlife and asked that the plan consider these impacts and how to mitigate them.
- A respondent asked that agencies do more outreach specifically to hikers while developing plans in the Gorge.

#### *Dog Mountain Trail Access*

- There are mixed opinions on using a permit system to manage usage of the Dog Mountain trail.
  - Some respondents think permits are necessary to reduce congestion and that they should be used to prioritize access for residents.
  - Other respondents are concerned that permits could present a financial barrier to communities and that it would be difficult for people with limited access to technology or without flexible schedules to obtain a permit. These respondents noted that if there must be a permit system, permits should be allocated by lottery rather than by fee.
- Several respondents noted that they avoid the Dog Mountain trail and other trails in the area because of how heavily trafficked they are.
- Several respondents suggested increasing awareness of other hikes near Dog Mountain to spread visitors out more.
  - One specifically suggested adding signage in the Dog Mountain parking lot listing other nearby hikes that people can visit if the lot is full.
  - Another suggested encouraging use of the TrailCheck app which allows users to report live congestion levels at trails, allowing users to choose a trail with minimal congestion.

### **Interactive Map Tool Comments (n = 20)**

Respondents were also presented with an interactive map of the corridor where they could drop comments at specific geographic locations. Their comments are summarized below.

- There were several comments about safety, congestion and other concerns near Cape Horn:
  - The Cape Horn viewing area and Ozone Climbing Crag create dangerous traffic and pedestrian congestion as people slow down to look at the view and people execute unsafe driving maneuvers.

- Slow moving trucks and RVs at Cape Horn do not use the provided turnouts and create congestion.
- The road is too narrow for vehicles, especially trucks.
- On weekends, parking overflows from the Cape Horn Trailhead onto county roads.
- The stretch of highway just past Cape Horn (milepost 27 – 28) is a residential area with a downgrade. Trucks use compression brakes creating noise pollution.
- Respondents also noted the difficulties of parking at Beacon Rock or Hamilton Mountain, Coyote Wall Trailhead, Catherine Creek Trailhead and Wind Mountain.
- A respondent noted an access concern at Table Mountain, stating that the public needs a nearby parking area now that public parking is no longer allowed at Bonneville Hot Springs Resort.
- Respondents provided comments on Dog Mountain Trailhead that echoed comments provided on other questions in the survey. These included:
  - Suggesting adding parking at Grant Lake.
  - Echoing concerns that a permit system would be inequitable and saying that if it must be done, it should be a lottery rather than a fee.
  - Noting that the existing permit system on weekends has improved congestion.
  - Asking agencies to consider hiker input when making changes to access.