

# **Bison Butte Survey Summary Report**

**Manitoba Cycling Association**



## **Introduction**

The Manitoba Cycling Association's (MCA) Bison Butte Committee works to manage the Bison Butte trails with the shared interests of mountain bikers, landowners and other trail users in mind. As part of this initiative, the Committee launched a short survey in May 2024 to hear from trail users and the broader community about their experiences using the Bison Butte trails and how they can be made even better.

The following report summarizes the results of the Bison Butte survey. This is just the first step. As the Committee continues its work it will consult with the mountain bike and trail user committee on a regular basis to make sure that everyone can help shape the future of Bison Butte. If you have any questions about this survey or the work of the Bison Butte Committee, please contact [BisonButte@gmail.com](mailto:BisonButte@gmail.com).

## **Approach to Survey**

The Bison Butte survey was open for feedback from May 29, 2024, to June 28, 2024. The MCA advertised and provided links to the survey on its website and through its social media channels. The Committee also promoted the survey through its own social media accounts. To incentivise participation, respondents were invited to enter their email address for a chance to win a full year family membership to Fort Whyte Alive.

The survey asked respondents for their perspectives on Bison Butte including what they see is valuable about the trails, what can be improved, and what types of conflicts or issues they meet when using the trails. This feedback will be used to help shape both short- and long-term planning for the site, and will inform future consultation and engagement activities.

A total of 124 responses to the survey were received.

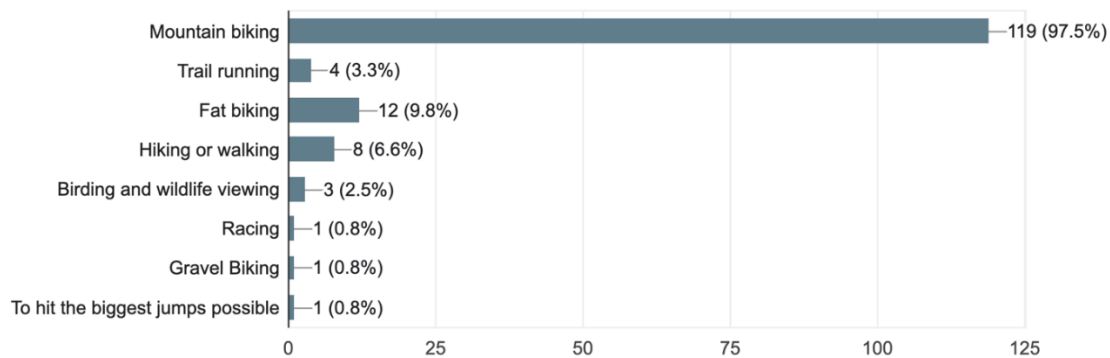
## **Results**

Respondents were asked about their use of the Bison Butte trails, including frequency of use and their familiarity with the site. Over 98 per cent of respondents said they have used the trails at least once in the past two years, and over 66 per cent indicated that they use the trails at least a few times each month. Over 71 per cent of respondents indicated they are very familiar with the trails. These data indicate the majority of respondents are frequent users of Bison Butte and would have relevant insight into how to improve the site.

Respondents were asked why they use the Bison Butte trails, and were provided with a list of options they could select. They could select more than one option and could also select an open ended "other" response option.

### Why do you use the Bison Butte trails? Select all that apply.

122 responses

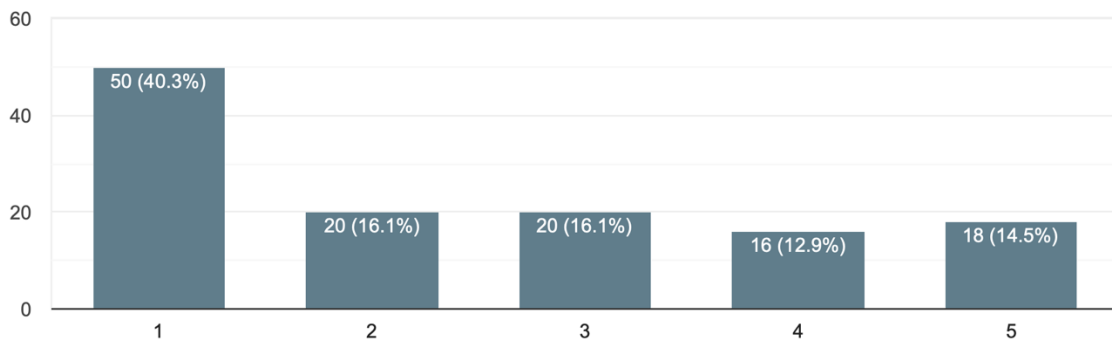


As the survey was promoted via the MCA's and the Bison Butte Committee's online channels, it is not unexpected that over 97 per cent of respondents indicated that they use the trails for mountain biking. Trail running, hiking and wildlife viewing are also noted responses, and it is anticipated that if the survey was distributed more widely or targeted to other potential trail users that these uses would be more prominent in the data. This suggests that while mountain biking is the primary intended use for the trails, the Committee should consider other trail users in its planning. It is also noted that the Bison Butte trails are multi-use and not exclusively for mountain bikes.

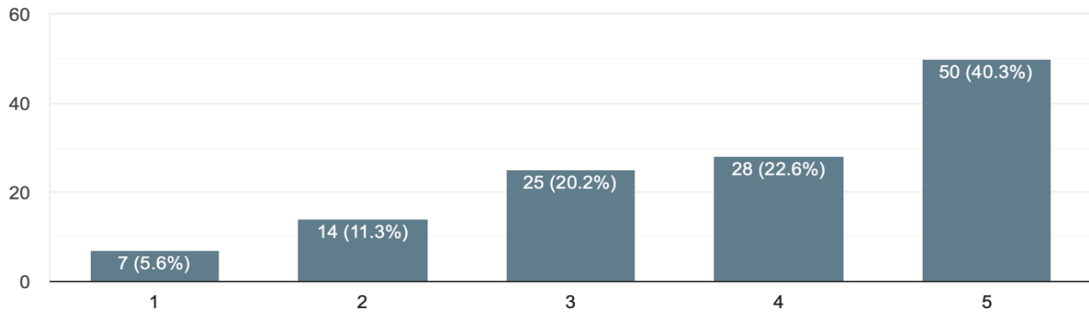
A series of questions asked respondents to rate on a scale of one to five (one being not important and five being very important) their perspectives on potential goals or objectives for the site being considered by the Committee. This includes enhancing the family friendly environment at the site, increasing the level of difficulty of the mountain bike trail features, expanding the site to include separate options for trail running and hiking, and expanding winter fat bike options.

How important is it to you to have a more family friendly trail network at Bison Butte (e.g., less steep climbs and descents, options for smooth flow trails w...n ride)? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.

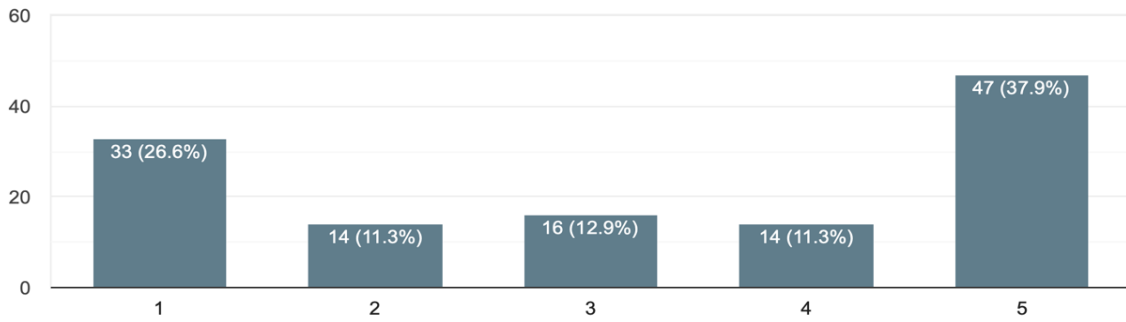
124 responses



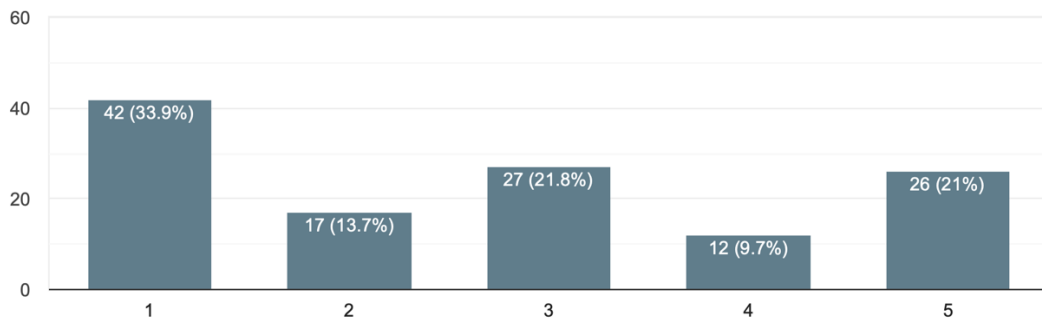
How important is it to you to have more challenging mountain bike features at Bison Butte (e.g., drops, gap jumps, tabletop jumps, rock gardens, tech...l climbs)? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.  
124 responses



How important is it to you to have trail running and/or hiking and walking routes separate from mountain bike trails? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.  
124 responses



How important is it to you to have groomed winter fat biking trail routes and snowshoeing routes? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.  
124 responses



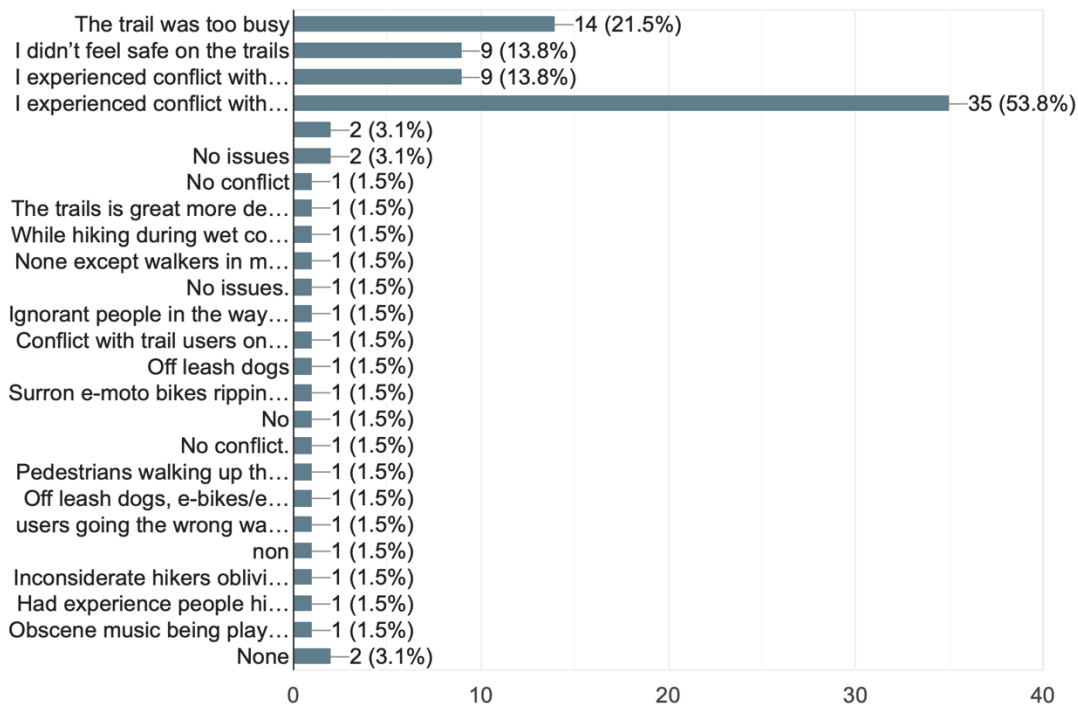
Improving the technicality of the mountain bike features was favored by respondents, with over 83 per cent selecting a favorable response. Alternatively, only 43 per cent of respondents selected a favorable response when asked about creating a more family friendly riding environment.

52 per cent of respondents selected a favorable response for creating more winter fat biking trails. This could be attributed to lower number of fat bike riders (note, the survey did not ask if respondents owned or rode fat bikes) or recognition of the challenges of grooming winter trails at the site given its exposure to wind.

When asked about creating running or walking trails separate from the mountain bike trails, over 62 per cent of respondents were in favour. This support for separate trails is consistent with responses to the question asking if trail users had experienced any negative interactions with other trail users. Over 53 per cent of respondents indicated they had had a negative experience with other trail users engaged in a different activity, while only 13 per cent indicated conflict with other users engaged in the same activity. Respondents also noted issues or conflicts with owners with off leash dogs, electric vehicles such as e-motorcycles, and trail users going the wrong direction.

Have you experienced any of the following issues with other trail users at the Bison Butte trails?  
Select all that apply.

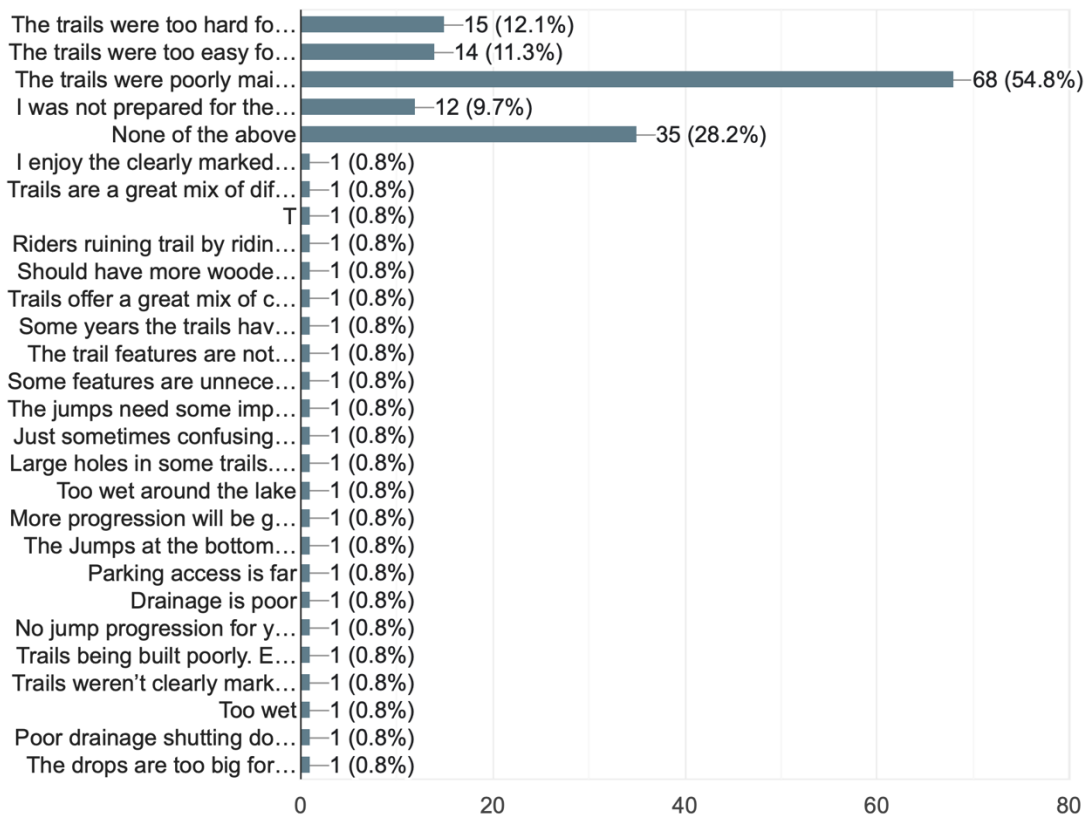
65 responses



Respondents were asked about the quality and design of the Bison Butte trails and could select from a series of answers or provide an open-ended response. Over 54 per cent of respondents noted the trails were poorly maintained. Open responses echoed the need for improved maintenance but also noted the need for improved features such as jumps. To note, this survey was taken in early summer 2024, and since that time the monthly sponsored Dig Nights have started and the MCA’s Green Team has been working to maintain and improve the trails.

Have you experienced any of the following issues with the quality or design of the Bison Butte trails?  
 Select all that apply.

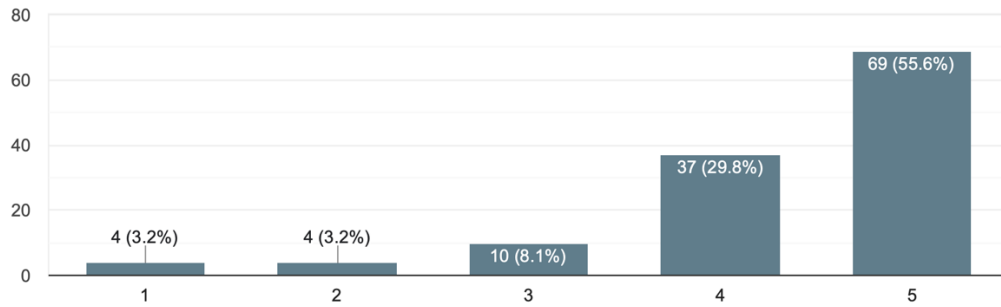
124 responses



A series of questions asked respondents to rate on a scale of one to five (one being not important and five being very important) their perspectives on potential infrastructure for the trail site. This includes improved signage, washroom facilities and sun shelters.

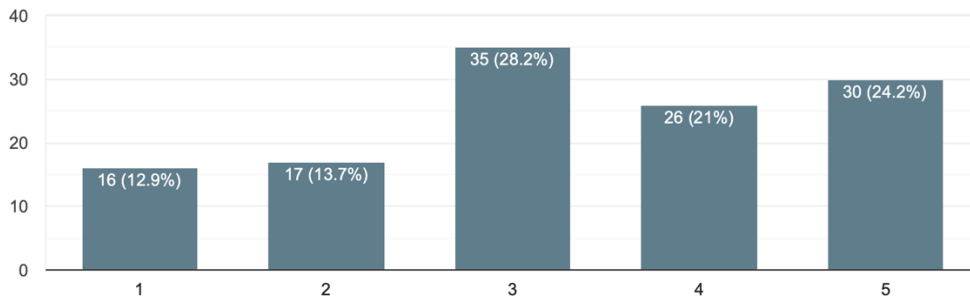
How important is it to you to have clear signage and directional way finding information on the trail? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.

124 responses



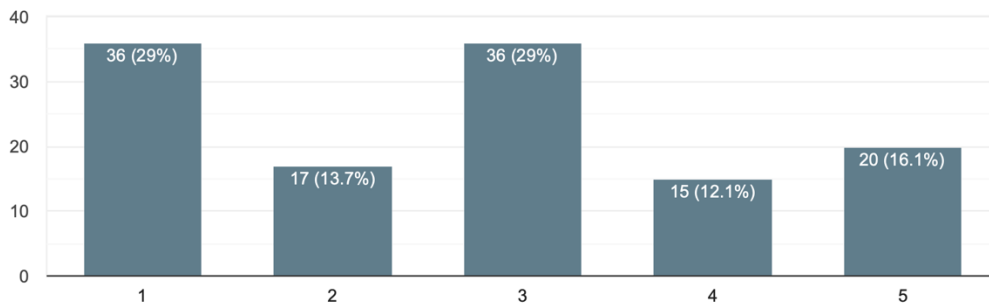
How important is it to you to have washroom facilities located at the trailhead? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.

124 responses



How important is it to you to have rain/sun shelters and picnic areas at the trailhead? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.

124 responses



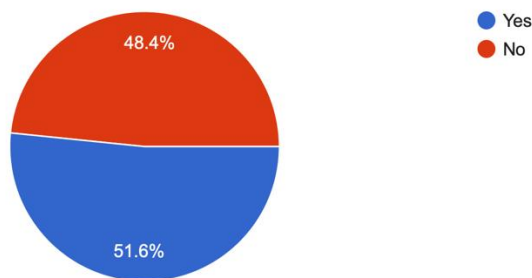
Over 93 per cent of respondents indicated a preference for improved signage. This is consistent with the responses regarding trail conflicts, and enhanced signage would be a key action to help reduce potential conflict on the trail while improving route finding and overall trail user experiences. Perspectives on other trail infrastructure such as washrooms and sun shelters are mixed, however these types of facilities could improve the family friendly environment by offering opportunities for kids and other beginner riders to take breaks and enjoy other activities.

Respondents were asked to provide an open-ended response on what would improve the trail user experience at Bison Butte. This question was intended to capture general perspectives that may not have been captured in earlier questions, or allow respondents to highlight important issues to them. Based on the responses received, there is significant support for improved maintenance and drainage at the site. This is consistent with responses to other questions in the survey and is a key focus of the Committee. Another key theme that emerged was the need to improve the features at the site, including enhancing or building high quality jumps and downhill specific tracks that can be hit safely at trail speed. Route finding and signage were also common themes that emerged in the responses.

In addition to questions about the Bison Butte site, the survey asked a series of general questions to better understand respondent's overall engagement in trail maintenance and their perspectives on revenue generating ideas for the site.

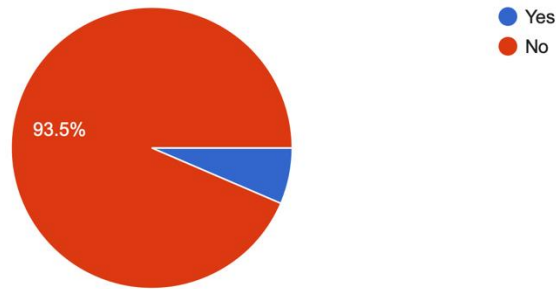
Respondents asked what if they were members of either the MCA (i.e., licence holder) or of Fort Whyte Alive. Just over 50 per cent held an MCA licence, while only 6.5 per cent of respondents are members of Fort Whyte Alive. This suggests Bison Butte users generally are not users of the broader Fort Whyte Alive site or amenities.

Are you currently or were recently a member of the Manitoba Cycling Association?  
124 responses



Are you currently a member of Fort Whyte Alive?

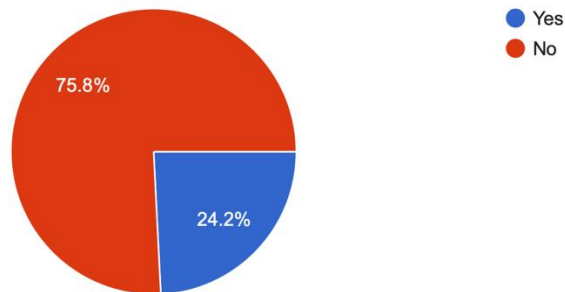
124 responses



When asked if they volunteered for a trail group or for the Bison Butte Dig Nights/Trail Days, 24 per cent of respondents said yes, while 59 per cent said they would be interested in volunteering to maintain the Bison Butte trails. This demonstrates a strong sense of community around the local trails, which is also evident in the strong participation during the season's Dig Nights.

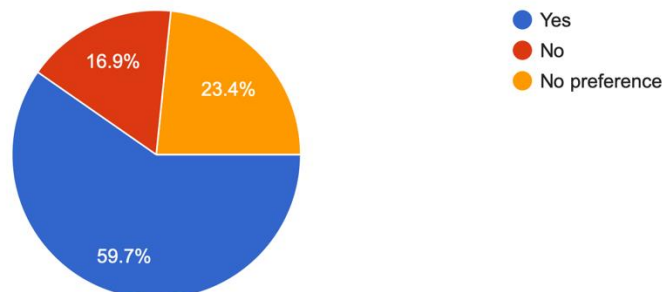
Do you currently volunteer for a trail group, including for Bison Butte trail days?

124 responses



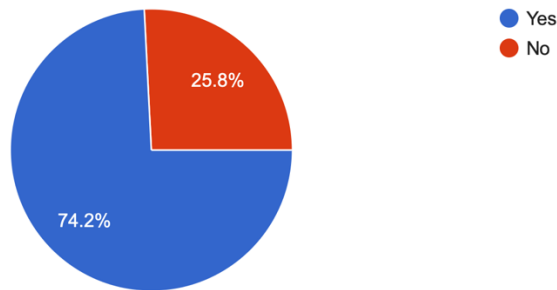
If available, would you be interested in volunteering to maintain the trails at Bison Butte?

124 responses

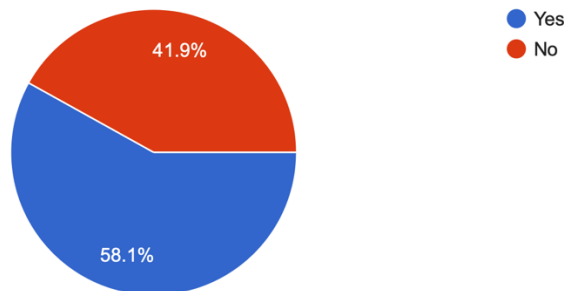


Consistent with the intent to volunteer, over 74 per cent of respondents said they would be willing to donate money to the maintenance and development of Bison Butte and 58 per cent they would pay a fee to ride there.

Would you donate money to support the maintenance and development of Bison Butte trails?  
124 responses



Would you pay a fee to use the Bison Butte trails if the money was used to support the maintenance and development of the trails?  
124 responses



Respondents were asked a series of voluntary questions, including how much their households spend on bikes or related equipment in the past year. Of the 120 responses to this question, over 69 per cent spend more than \$1000 on bikes and related equipment per year, while over 41 per cent spend more than \$2500. This level of spending suggests significant engagement and commitment by the local mountain bike community in the sport. This also represents a key target audience that local bike retailers and companies could reach via potential sponsorship opportunities to support the continued development and maintenance of Bison Butte trails.

## Conclusions

The following six conclusions were identified based on the data from the Bison Butte survey.

1. **Investment in high-quality and consistent maintenance of the trails** is important to protect and enhance what already exists, improving the user experience while reducing

hazards. This includes focusing on drainage solutions and addressing areas prone to excessive water. Maintenance is a key priority for the MCA and the Bison Butte Committee moving forward.

This year the MCA continued to hire the summer Green Team to maintain the trails, including a site supervisor to coordinate all maintenance and development work at the site. This work is in addition to the sponsored volunteer Dig Nights that take place throughout the summer. The Dig Nights, which are sponsored by local bike shops and businesses, provide an opportunity for the local trail-user community to come together and invest their time into making the trails they ride even better.

- 2. More technical trail features and flow** was identified as a key priority by respondents, reflective of the need to ensure the trails can evolve along with the sport's progression and help grow mountain biking in Manitoba. The Bison Butte Committee plans to begin work on developing a long-term master site plan, which would incorporate options for new features to enhance the technicality of certain trails. Specific timelines for the development of this plan have not been confirmed, but the Committee aims to begin planning this winter and would invite the community to comment on proposed designs in the spring and summer.
- 3. More family friendly and beginner trails** would help grow the sport of mountain biking in Manitoba and ensure the site is inclusive and accessible for a wide-range of community members. While the need for a more inclusive approach to trail development was not an overwhelming theme in the survey data, there was consistency from a minority of respondents who view this as an important aspect that needs to be considered. This aligns with the MCA's approach to rider development and would complement programs like Hop On! and Kids of Mud. When combined with more technical features targeted to intermediate and advanced riders, the inclusion of family friendly infrastructure and green features will ensure the site can appeal to all riders.
- 4. Separate trails for running and walking** could help expand Bison Butte's user community while reducing or mitigating potential conflicts between trail users. The involvement of other trail user groups will be important in developing a long-term master site plan.
- 5. Signage is critical for both route finding and to improve safety**, ensuring trail users know where they are going and reducing the potential for users to go the wrong direction. Improved signage would also mitigate potential conflicts with trail users. New signs specifying non-permitted activities such as throttle assist e-bikes or e-motorcycles need to be installed as there has been an increase in these types of vehicles seen on the trails.
- 6. Consistent and specific funding** is necessary to ensure that the Bison Butte trails can be maintained and developed in a sustainable way. The survey noted the interest by the community to donate to trail development, but this would need to be augmented with

larger donations from the business community as well as grant funding. Developing a funding strategy is a key priority for the Committee moving forward.