

# I-70 User Study

## *Winter Research Results - 2019*

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## AN OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

The results from the 2019 I-70 User Study Program are presented in the attached report. This overview presents a summary of key findings from the study that are further documented in the report that follows. The full report provides a discussion of research results using a series of graphs and charts and presents analyses from the wide-ranging research effort on parking and travel patterns in the I-70 corridor.

The 2019 research was designed to allow comparisons to past research. Surveys were conducted at the T-Rex and Woolly Mammoth lots on dates in late January and early to late February 2019, approximately the same weekends that were surveyed in 2017, 2014, and 2012. The research also incorporates survey results from the RRC Front Range Snowsports Enthusiasts Panel. The Panel data provide input from a broad sample of Front Range winter visitors to mountain resorts, and it included survey questions that allow for comparison to results from the 2017 and 2014 panels.

### **Notable findings from the intercept survey of T-Rex and Woolly Mammoth lot users include:**

- Intercept surveys were conducted on three weekends at the Woolly Mammoth parking lot in Morrison. Interviews were conducted starting early on study day mornings (5:45 AM) and continuing through late morning. Additionally, some surveys were conducted during late afternoons to gather input from returning travel parties, primarily snowsports enthusiasts.
- The Dinosaur Lot users are predominantly male and young adults, with Denver Zip codes most represented. The largest share of lot users come from the Denver ZIP Codes (35%), but Jefferson (24%), Arapahoe (13%), and Adams (11%) counties are also strongly represented. The geographic origins of lot users have remained similar over time, although Boulder residents are notably less represented, and growth in users from Denver and Jefferson Counties is evident. P. 7 – 8.
- Overall, vehicle occupancy results are similar to 2017 and we believe increased carpooling is occurring before getting to Morrison. The 2019 results point to a similar share of drivers arriving at the lot alone compared to 2017 – 53% this year, 56% in 2017. However, the data show notable shifts from the results in 2014 when 70% reported arriving alone suggesting the conclusion that some carpooling is being initiated before arriving at the Morrison lots. P. 9.
- Respondents cited an average of approximately 3 different motivations for carpooling, highlighting that there are multiple reasons why carpooling appeals to lot users. As in all past years of the study, a most frequently identified motivation for carpooling was to “save on gas” (67%). However, this year, social/fun (67%) was also high, up from 55% in 2017. Other important motivations this year were to reduce environmental impact (45%) and reduce traffic congestion (41%). It is notable that this year and in 2017, approximately 35% of respondents mentioned “save on resort parking.” This category is up sharply from 2014 when only 16%

identified this reason as a motivation. Clearly, one of the benefits of parking charges at the resorts is to increase carpooling. P. 9 – 10.

- Respondents estimated using the Dinosaur Lots for roughly half of their winter mountain trips (an average of 60%) similar to past years. Meanwhile, approximately a quarter of respondents use the Dinosaur Lots for every single one of their trips to the mountains (25%). P. 10 – 11.
- Trip destinations are relatively spread out with no one location attracting a majority of respondents. Keystone was most cited (13%), followed closely by Arapahoe Basin and Copper Mountain (12%), Winter Park (9%), and Vail, Breckenridge, and Loveland (8%). These use patterns showed some notable shifts from 2017 that might be explained through discussions with resort operators on some of their efforts to encourage various transportation initiatives. For example, reports of Arapahoe Basin were up sharply as a destination, while Keystone and Winter Park were down. Full results of these findings from the past five years are presented in the report that follows. P. 13 – 14.
- Results indicate that the Dinosaur lots are used by day visitors to the mountains, and those staying overnight. While less than a quarter of respondents (22%) plan to leave their vehicles for one or more nights, there are major differences in these results by day of the interview. As might be expected, lot users arriving Friday stay in the mountains longer and are especially likely to stay overnight (78%), compared to Saturday and Sunday when the lots are most used by day visitors (86% and 91% respectively). As explained later in this report, parking lots have been filling earlier and are especially likely to receive heavy use overnight on Fridays. This has contributed to earlier filling of the lots and complaints and frustrations about parking capacity and finding lots full at various times. P. 15.
- Sixty-nine percent of those interviewed in the lots indicated that they use I-70 traffic information sources (up from 64% in 2017). However, certain groups were especially likely to use traffic information sources. Passholders are more likely than non-passholders to use information sources (+14 %age points), and respondents who have made 21 or more trips to the mountains are nearly twice as likely to use traffic information sources as those who have made five or fewer trips. Clearly, there are opportunities to further inform and grow the population of knowledgeable and up-to-date drivers in the corridor. P. 17.
- Sources of information used by parking lot users. Google Maps was the most used source of information identified this year; this category was asked for the first time in 2019 and it eclipsed all other sources. Approximately 20% indicated they use CoTrip.org, 13% use the CDOT email alerts, 8% use CDOT text alerts and 11% use GoI70.com, with progressively smaller shares of respondents using other sources. This year, notably more respondents indicated using CDOT email and text messages (40% taken together) up from 18% in 2017. WAZE App (11%) was tracked for the first time; it has clearly made inroads as a source of information. P. 18.
- Commercial bus and van service usage was up slightly at the T-Rex/Woolly Mammoth lots over 2017. While a small part of overall use, these modes saw increases. However, when asked

about likelihood of taking a ski van or bus in the future, results were little changed from 2017 and 2014. About 17% said “very likely,” 44% said “somewhat likely” and 40% said “not at all likely.” There is a significant segment that is interested at some level (over half) but the fact that the interest has not changed over time is interesting. Instead, use of carpooling has continued to increase and it is clearly a preferred alternative to buses/vans for a large segment of travelers. P. 19.

- Seventy percent of respondents surveyed in the lots were aware of the Passenger Vehicle Traction Law. Of those that were aware, a large share (87%) report checking their tires for compliance; put another way, this represents an estimated 61% of survey respondents checking their tires. P. 19 – 20.

**The Front Range Snowsports Enthusiasts Panel generated even more insights around behaviors and perceptions as they relate to I-70 corridor travel:**

- A notable 67 % of panel respondents reported that the frequency of their skiing/snowboarding had been reduced because of I-70 congestion. When asked to elaborate on the specific ways in which their snowsports activity had been reduced, comments centered around several major themes: avoidance of skiing/riding altogether, skiing/riding at locations other than those along the I-70 corridor, skiing/riding during the week instead of on the weekends, skiing/riding fewer days, and taking overnight trips instead of day trips. P. 28.
- A vast majority of respondents make an effort to avoid the high congestion times on I-70 (95 %), up from 94 % in 2017 and 90 % in 2014, and 94 % in 2012. A consistently high percentage of respondents continue to say that they are making efforts to avoid high congestion times. On average, panel respondents use a combination of three different strategies to avoid congestion on I-70. In 2019, the most common types of strategies involved arriving early at the resort and/or leaving early or late, staying overnight near the resort, and avoiding weekend travel (whether it be on Saturday or Sunday specifically, or weekends altogether). P. 31.
- Respondents who own a pass or lift ticket pack behave differently than those without one. As was the case in 2017 and 2014, holders of multiday products including passes are more likely to arrive early and leave early. There are other differences in behavior of pass holders that suggest opportunities to capitalize on this segment of snowsports enthusiasts and to use the passes for communications purposes, as well as to potentially influence different types of behavior in the future. The data show passholders use the digital communications sources for I-70 information more heavily. In other words, they can be kept informed of conditions more easily if there are emergencies or other circumstances to communicate. In another example, the fact that the data show passholders relatively likely to leave resorts earlier would potentially be considered a positive for spreading out congestion on I-70. However, as an increasing majority of skiers/riders have passes, the afternoon peaks in traffic have occurred earlier. It may be time to look for methods to encourage a segment of these travelers to actually stay later to soften the early afternoon peak. This is but one example of the findings

from the survey that could be further explored if there is a desire to consider how the data might be used to encourage new initiatives or communications strategies. P. 37.

- Over one-third of panel respondents have used the Dinosaur Lots for carpooling. When asked to comment on their experience, respondents are generally positive, noting the convenience and ease of the lots for carpooling, and their appreciation for the availability of the lots. However, there were increasing concerns this year about capacity of the lots and finding them full or close to full. Suggestions for looking for additional land for expansion or new lots were suggested by some. A complete set of verbatim comments are provided under separate cover. P. 38.
- Open-ended comments provide insights that expand upon the quantitative results from the Intercept and Panel Surveys. The 2019 research provided a number of opportunities for snowsports participants to comment on various aspects of travel in the I-70 corridor. In general, over the years of research, the comments have become more specific in terms of complaints, with numerous expressions of frustration and even capitulation; for many, none of the strategies for trying to deal with traffic are working. These findings are presented in several word clouds at the conclusion of the report. However, to fully understand the breadth of comments that were received in 2019, it is useful to review the full set of verbatim comments provided under separate cover.