



**Research** Report

# Cook County Mountain Biking Trails 2021 Summer Visitor Profile

**PREPARED FOR** *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission*

**BY** *Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota*

December 2021



## About the Parks & Trails Council

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to acquiring, protecting, and enhancing critical land for the public's use and benefit. Founded in 1954, the Parks & Trails Council acquires threatened and critical parcels of land, advocates at the Minnesota Capitol, supports volunteers, and produces original research on issues and trends facing Minnesota's parks and trails.







More information about Parks & Trails Council is available at [www.parksandtrails.org](http://www.parksandtrails.org).

## About the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission is comprised of 13 members appointed by the governor, two members from each of the six districts and one at-large member. The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission was created to undertake system planning and provide recommendations to the legislature for grants from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area that have been designated as regionally significant.

More information about the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission is available at [www.gmrptcommission.org](http://www.gmrptcommission.org).

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Cover: Britton Peak Mountain Biking. Photo from the Superior Cycling Association.

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# Executive Summary

## Cook County Mountain Biking Trails

### 2021 Summer Visitor Profile



**About:** Cook County's mountain biking trail system offers 28+ miles of mountain biking trails at Britton Peak and Pincushion that put riders in the heart of the Sawtooth range and provide remote wilderness, ancient rock formations, boreal forest and stunning views of Lake Superior. The trails have been part of the designated Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails System since 2016.

#### Trail Traffic Estimates

≈ **8,000**  
total system visits



**10-11am**  
Trail use peaks  
in the late morning



**40%**  
of trail use occurs  
on weekends

#### Visitor Demographics

+ Men **75%**  
+ Women **25%**  
+ Average age ≈ **40**

+ Gen Z **22%**  
+ Millennials **25%**  
+ Gen X **34%**  
+ Baby Boomers **19%**

+ White **95%**  
+ Some other race **5%**  
+ Hispanic **3%**

+ Bachelor's degree **78%**  
+ Income over \$100k **61%**  
+ Disability **2%**

#### Trail Experience



**96%**  
mountain  
biking



**74%**  
visiting to  
experience nature



**72%**  
visiting to do something  
exciting and adventurous



**22%**  
visiting with  
children



**44%**  
First-time  
visitors



**82%**  
Rated the trail  
"very good"





## Trail Tourism



**85%**

from  
Minnesota



**72%**

of visitors stayed overnight  
in Cook County



**19**

Different states  
represented



**34%**

of overnight visitors  
stayed in campgrounds



**29%**

stayed in the  
Cook County  
Area for 5+ nights



**81%**

said the trails were  
*at least* part of the reason  
they visited Cook County

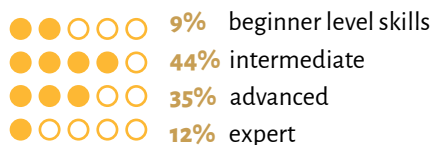


Probably the **best designed, balanced and fun mountain bike trail system** I have visited anywhere in the world.

~ Britton Peak visitor from San Jose, CA



## Rider Characteristics



## Information Sources



**61%**

use trail apps to  
learn about the trail

**Methodology:** In 2021 the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission contracted with Parks & Trails Council to conduct a visitor profile for Cook County's mountain biking trail system. Automated counters were installed at four locations across the trail system, and a systematic visitor intercept survey collected information on visitor characteristics (n = 219). Results are representative of summer (Memorial Day through Labor Day) visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trails during 2021 and have a margin of error of +/- 6.6 percentage points.

For full results and methodology, see the full Visitor Profile Report.

# Introduction

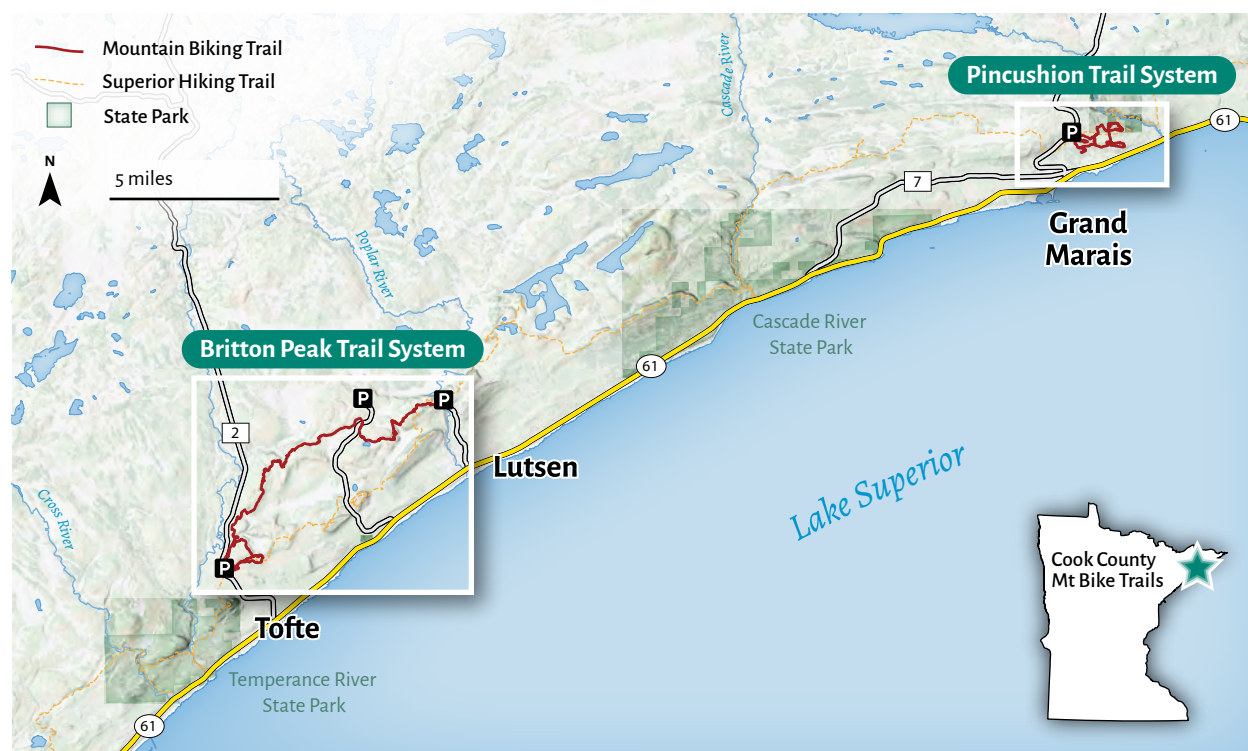
Cook County, located in far northeastern Minnesota, is home to two mountain biking trail systems that put visitors in the heart of the Sawtooth range overlooking Lake Superior (Figure 1). The system is anchored by Britton Peak, which offers beginner, intermediate and advanced loops and connects to Lutsen via the Jackpot-Highclimber wilderness flow trail. Pincushion Mountain, located just north of Grand Marais off the Gunflint Trail, is the smaller of the two systems but still offers

over 8 miles of trail to explore. Together, the two systems provide over 28 miles of singletrack, traversing everything from ancient rock formations, dense boreal forest, smooth switchbacks, jumps, rock gardens and stunning views of the range, Lake Superior and Grand Marais Harbor.

Cook County's mountain biking trail system was developed through a cooperative partnership of Cook County, the U.S. Forest Service and the Superior Cycling

Figure 1

## Cook County Mountain Biking Trail Systems





Association. The trails were designated and became a part of the Greater Minnesota Regional Park and Trail System in 2016.

In 2021 the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) contracted with Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota (P&TC) to study the visitor profile and use of the Cook County mountain biking trail system. GMRPTC is responsible for system planning and providing recommendations to the legislature for grants funded by the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund to counties

and cities outside the seven-county metropolitan area. The visitor profile was undertaken to understand user numbers, visitor origination, trip characteristics and basic demographics of trail users. Ultimately, this data is meant to help inform planning and marketing efforts by GMRPTC and collaborative partners.

This visitor profile consists of two parts. First, automated trail counters were installed at four locations across the trail system (Figure 2). The trail counters collected data on total traffic, travel

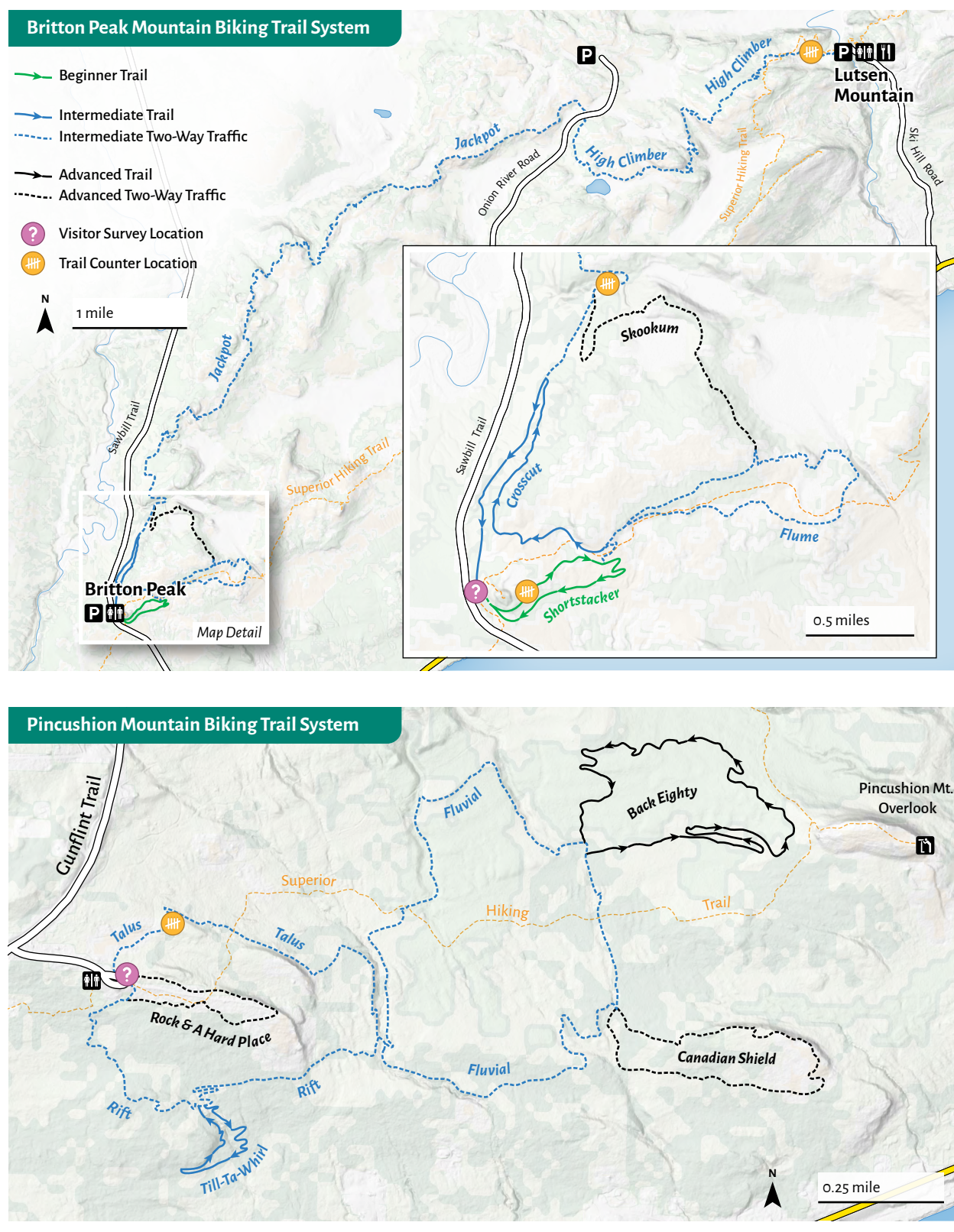


Photo credit: Superior Cycling Association



Figure 2

## Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain Biking Trails



direction, hourly patterns, and weekly patterns. Second, a systematic intercept visitor survey was conducted at Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain trailheads. Staff and volunteers used electronic tablets to collect surveys during high and low-use periods (mornings and afternoons, weekdays and weekends). A total of 219 surveys were collected. Together, the trail counts and visitor surveys provide a snapshot of how many people use Cook County's mountain biking trails, and who those people are.

The visitor studies were conducted during the summer and early fall of 2021 and designed to be representative of the summer season, defined as Memorial Day through Labor Day.

There are two important notes about the scope of this project. First, when this report refers to Cook County's mountain biking trail system, it's referring specifically to the singletrack trail systems at Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain. Cook County is also home to numerous backcountry gravel roads that are used by mountain bikers. Those facilities are beyond the scope of this report, and our results are likely not representative of gravel-road bikers.

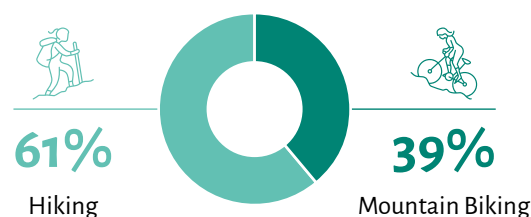
Second, Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain both serve as trailheads for the Superior Hiking Trail, which many hikers use to summit Carlton Peak, Britton Peak

and Pincushion Overlook. The parking area of the Pincushion Mountain trailhead is also a popular overlook for views of Lake Superior. *This report focuses exclusively on the users of the singletrack trail systems at Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain*, and it's worth noting such users make up a minority of visitors at both locations. Our analysis of vehicles entering and leaving the Britton Peak parking lot during surveying hours estimates that the Superior Hiking Trail accounts for approximately 61% of the visitors at Britton Peak (Figure 3). Similar data is not available for Pincushion Mountain, but our experience collecting visitor surveys there suggests mountain bikers make up a small proportion of its visitors.

For more details on this report's methods, [see our methodology](#).

Figure 3

### Activity split of visitors at Britton Peak Trailhead



*Note:* Based on observation of 631 vehicles entering/leaving the Britton Peak parking area during surveying hours.

# Trail Traffic Estimates

## **Britton Peak’s mountain biking trail system received nearly 6,000 visits during summer 2021**

The Shortstacker Trail at Britton Peak is a one-way loop trail that serves as the only access route to the rest of the trail system (refer back to Figure 2). A trail counter was installed on the outbound trail to measure everyone entering the system from the Britton Peak parking area. Overall, a total of 5,939 “visits” were recorded during the summer of 2021.<sup>1</sup> Summer average daily traffic (SADT) on the Shortstacker Trail was 59 trail users.

Due to the layout of the Britton Peak system, it’s possible that visitors are riding loops and “entering” the Shortstacker Trail












multiple times per visit. It’s unknown how many users do this, though anecdotal observations made during visitor surveying found the vast majority of visitors enter on the Shortstacker Trail and exit the system on Crosscut. As such, it’s unlikely “loop riders” significantly bias traffic volumes on the Shortstacker, though future research would be needed to confirm this.

## **Estimating use on Jackpot and Highclimber**

The trail layout of both Jackpot and Highclimber make it challenging to understand their use in relation to the Britton Peak-Lutsen system as a whole. Both Jackpot (SADT = 30) and Highclimber (SADT = 32) receive nearly identical use (Figure 4).

Figure 4

## **Summer traffic estimates**

	▶ Northbound	◀ Southbound	Total Traffic
Britton Peak (Shortstacker)	 <b>5,939</b> 59 SADT	NA	 <b>5,939</b> 59 SADT
Britton Peak (Jackpot)	 <b>1,602</b> 16 SADT	 <b>1,421</b> 14 SADT	 <b>3,023</b> 30 SADT
Lutsen (Highclimber)	 <b>1,531</b> 15 SADT	 <b>1,659</b> 17 SADT	 <b>3,190</b> 32 SADT
Pincushion (Talus)	 <b>802</b> 8 SADT	 <b>802</b> 8 SADT	 <b>1,603</b> 16 SADT

### *Notes:*

Summer defined as Saturday, May 29, 2021 through Monday, September 6, 2021 (Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day).

SADT = Summer Average Daily Traffic.

Britton Peak Shortstacker is a one-way trail

<sup>1</sup> A “visit” in this sense refers to every instance one person “enters” the trail system

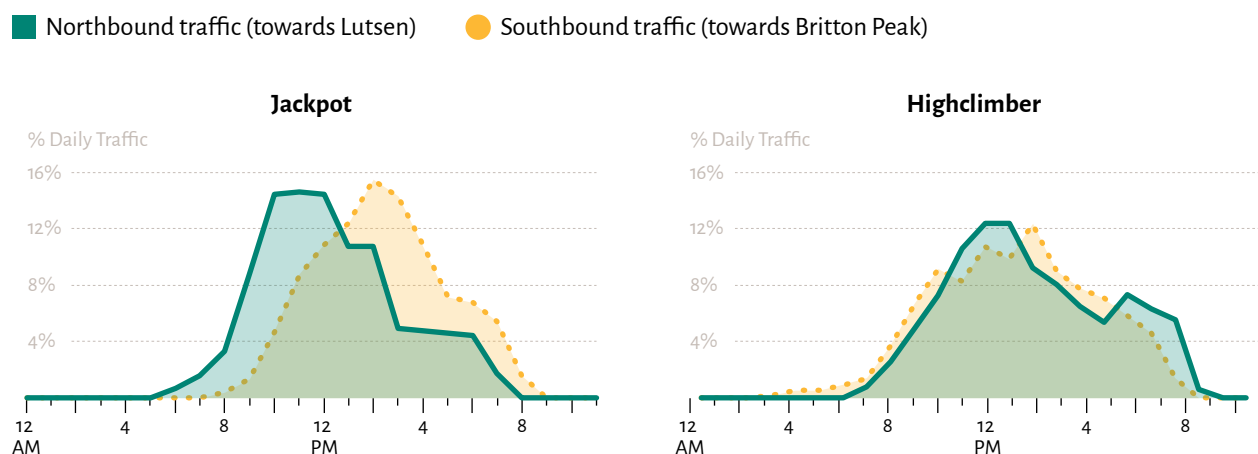
This makes some intuitive sense, as together they form a point-to-point wilderness flow trail connecting Britton Peak to Lutsen Mountain. There's several complicating factors when interpreting the traffic flows, however. Riders can access Jackpot and Highclimber from either Britton Peak, Lutsen, or a trailhead on Onion River Road. Thus, traffic at both locations includes visitors doing out-and-back trips from three different starting locations *and* visitors doing point-to-point shuttle trips. As such, our data is insufficient to fully and confidently understand the number of “unique” visits at each location. The data is suggestive, however, that traffic at both locations is mostly out-and-back trips: travel direction is split nearly 50/50

at each location, and the hourly patterns at Jackpot indicate most visitors enter the system in late morning and return early afternoon (Figure 5). The hourly pattern on Highclimber is less definitive, however, and open to different explanations.

It's also unknown how much of the traffic on Jackpot and Highclimber is independent of traffic on Shortstacker. Theoretically, the vast majority of Jackpot riders also use Shortstacker.<sup>2</sup> As such, it's likely the vast majority of traffic on Jackpot is also included in the Shortstacker count. Working on that assumption, and assuming the number of riders who make multiple loops around Shortstacker is negligible, approximately 27% of the visitors at Britton

Figure 5

## Summer hourly traffic by travel direction



Notes:  
Data from August 16 - 29, 2021

<sup>2</sup> The only way to ride Jackpot without riding Shortstacker would be to ride the wrong-way on Crosscut, or start from the north and either shuttle a vehicle or ride the Gitchi Gami State Trail (which is paved) for the return trip. It's assumed few riders fit either category.



Peak ride Jackpot. In contrast, a large share of riders on Highclimber is likely “unique.” Some riders certainly ride Shortstacker and Highclimber on the same visit, though it’s unknown how many. Future research would be required to test these assumptions and gain a fuller understanding of the traffic flows across the Britton Peak-Lutsen mountain biking trail system.

### **Pincushion Mountain receives significantly less traffic than Britton Peak**

Of the four locations we conducted trail counts in Cook County, Pincushion Mountain received by far the least amount of traffic (SADT = 16) (Figure 4). The counter at Pincushion was on the Talus Trail and, like with Jackpot and Highclimber, it’s hard to know if visitors were using the trail for out-and-back trips. Traffic direction was split perfectly 50/50 on the Talus Trail, again suggesting out-and-back trips, but

it’s possible riders are split 50/50 in terms of which direction they ride the Talus-Rift Trail loop (refer to Figure 2 for a map).

Regardless, the data is clear that Pincushion’s mountain biking trails are used significantly less than Britton Peak, Jackpot and Highclimber. Depending on what assumptions are made, Pincushion Mountain likely accounts for anywhere between 10% and 20% of visits to Cook County’s mountain biking trail system.

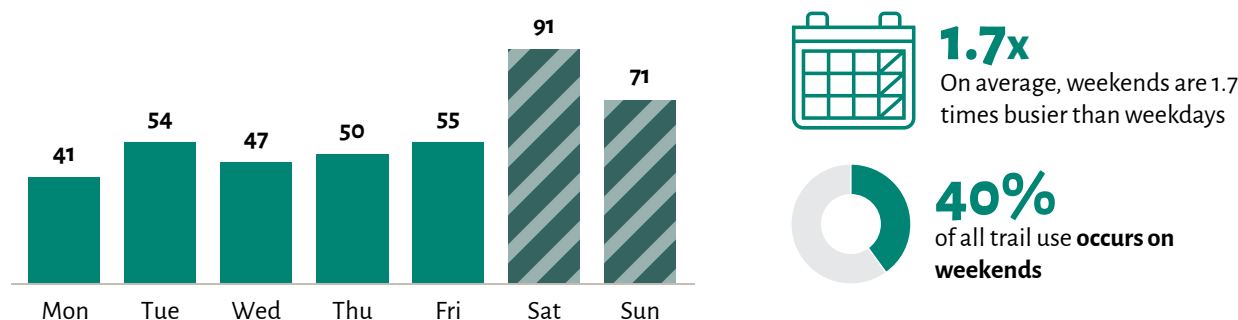
### **Weekends account for 40% of trail use**

On average, weekends are 1.7 times busier than weekdays (Figure 6). Saturday is the busiest day of the week (average Saturday daily traffic = 91) while Mondays are the slowest (average Monday daily traffic = 41). Overall, 40% of all trail use on Cook County’s mountain biking system occurs on weekends.

Figure 6

### **Summer day-of-week traffic**

*Average daily traffic on Britton Peak Shortstacker Trail*



*Notes:*

Summer is defined as Saturday, May 29, 2021 through Monday, September 6, 2021 (Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day).

### Daily use peaks in the late morning

While there is some variation across the trail system, traffic tends to peak in the late morning (between 10am and 11am, depending on the day of the week).

Weekend traffic on Cook County’s mountain biking trails follows a standard “recreational” pattern: the first visitors arrive around 7am, traffic picks up quickly in the mid morning (9am-10am), peaks late morning just before lunch, and then slowly tapers off through the afternoon. By dinner time on weekends, most visitors are off the trail (Figure 7).

Weekday hourly patterns are similar to weekends with slight variations. Weekday hourly traffic follows the same trend as

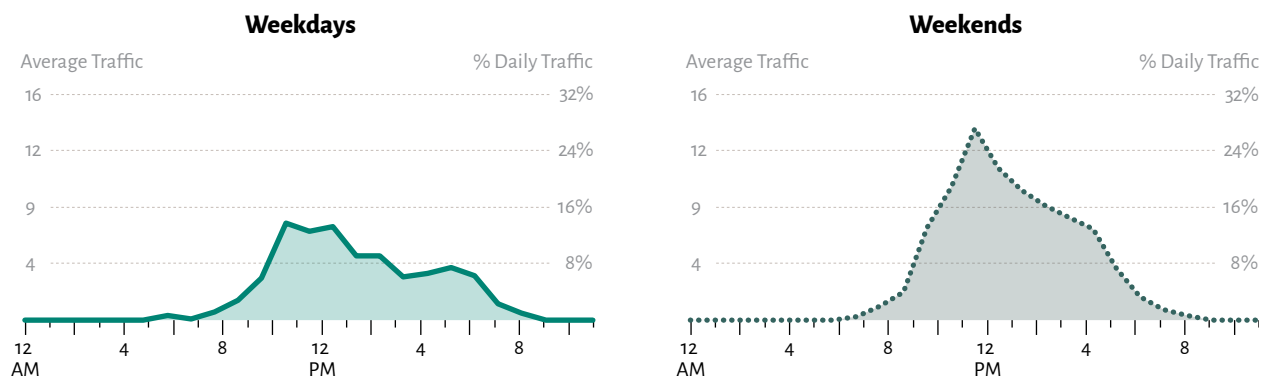
weekend traffic during the morning and early afternoon hours (only with lower traffic volumes). Late afternoon traffic on weekdays tapers off more gradually than weekend traffic, however, and levels off between 4pm and 6pm. On average, weekday evenings are busier than weekend evenings. While explanations for this can only be speculated on, it may be due to local riders arriving after work and getting in a short ride before dinner.

Fact sheets summarizing key trail count metrics for each location are available in Appendix A.

Figure 7

### Summer hourly traffic

*Summer average hourly traffic on Britton Peak Shortstacker Trail*



*Notes:*

Summer is defined as Saturday, May 29, 2021 through Monday, September 6, 2021 (Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day).



## Visitor Demographics

### Visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trail system span a wide range of ages

The average *adult* visitor to Cook County's mountain biking trail system is between 45 and 48 years old (median = 46; mean = 46.7; 95% C.I. [45.0, 48.5]). Among all adult visitors, the majority (54%) are in their 40s or 50s.

The average age of *all* visitors, however, is younger. The survey did not directly ask for the ages of children visitors (under 18), but it did ask how many children were in each visitor group. Overall, 20% of all visitors are children under 18 (Figure 8). If it's assumed the average age of children visitors is 12, the average age of *all* visitors is approximately 40 years old.<sup>1</sup>

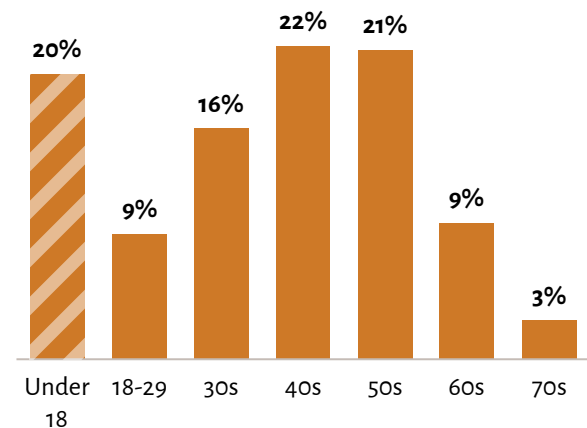
Generations provide another method of understanding visitors by looking at their place in life, whether a young adult, middle-aged or retired. Looking at generations is informative because it provides a way to understand how different formative experiences (e.g., world events, technological advances) interact with visitors' life stage to form recreational preferences. Generation X (age 41-56) makes up the largest share of visitors on Cook County's mountain biking trails,

accounting for over a third of visitors (34%). Interestingly, Gen X is the smallest generational cohort in Minnesota, so it's

Figure 8

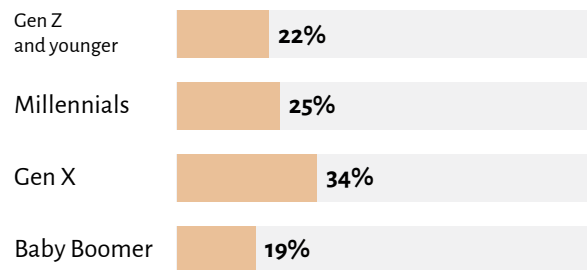
### Visitors by age

% of all visitors



### Visitors by generation

% of all visitors



Q22: What year were you born? (n = 215)

Notes: Ages were only asked of adult visitors. Percentage under 18 is calculated based upon group composition (Q11). Generations are defined as Gen Z and younger (born 1997 or after; Age 24 and younger), Millennials (born 1981-96; Age 25-40), Gen X (born 1965-80; Age 41-56), and Baby Boomer (born 1946-64; Age 57-75).

<sup>1</sup> The Loppet Foundation, a large organization that serves youth in Minneapolis, offers mountain biking camps for kids starting at age 7. Assuming a normal distribution of ages between 7 and 17, children on the trail have an average age of 12.

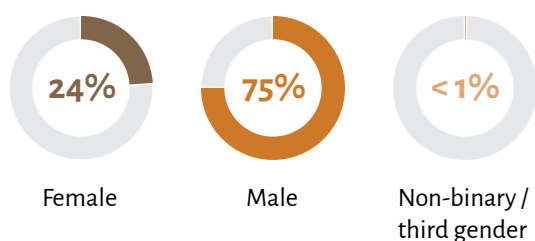
perhaps surprising they make up the largest share of visitors. Part of the reason Gen Xers are well represented on the trails is likely due to their children being of mountain biking age: 60% of the Gen Xers were visiting the trails with children, compared to only 22% of all visitors.

After Generation X, Millennials (age 25-40) are the next largest cohort amongst visitors (25% of visitors), followed by Gen Zers and younger (age 24 and younger; 22% of visitors) and Baby Boomers (age 57-75; 19% of visitors).

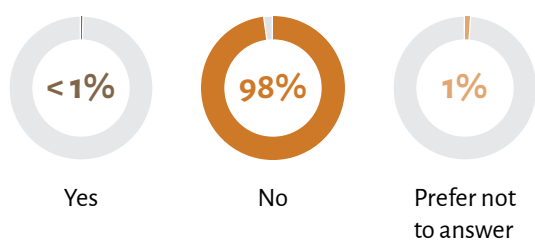
Figure 9

### Visitors by gender identity % of adult visitors

What is your gender identity?



Do you identify as transgender?



Q23. What is your gender identity? (n = 218)

Q24. Do you identify as transgender? (n = 204)

### Males account for a significant majority of visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trail system

Visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trail system are predominately male. Three-quarters (75%) of adult visitors identify as male, compared to only 24% of visitors who identify as female. Fewer than 1% of visitors identified as either non-binary or a third gender.

A small minority (fewer than 1%) of visitors identify as transgender. The majority of visitors (98%) do not identify as transgender, while 1% of visitors preferred not to answer (Figure 9).

### The majority of visitors are white, highly-educated, and high-income

A significant majority of visitors (95%) identify as white (Figure 10). Approximately 5% of visitors identify as "some other race, ethnicity or origin," while 3% identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Fewer than 1% of visitors are Native American, Middle Eastern or North African or Pacific Islander. No respondents to the visitor survey identified as Black, African American or Asian.

Visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trail system have disproportionately high-incomes compared to the statewide average. Over half of visitors (61%) have annual household incomes of \$100,000 or higher (Figure 11). For comparison, only 35% of Minnesota households make over \$100,000



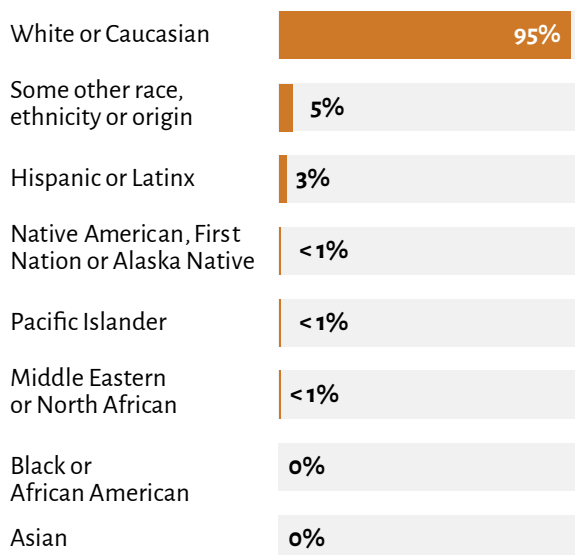
annually.<sup>2</sup> Correspondingly, visitors are also less likely to have below-average incomes. Whereas 32% of Minnesota households make less than \$50,000 annually, only 12% of visitors do.

Visitors are also disproportionately highly-educated compared to the Minnesota average. A significant majority (78%) of visitors have either a graduate degree or a bachelor's degree (Figure 12). For comparison, only 36% of Minnesotans over the age of 25 have a college degree.<sup>3</sup>

A small minority (2%) of visitors report having a physical, mental or sensory

Figure 10

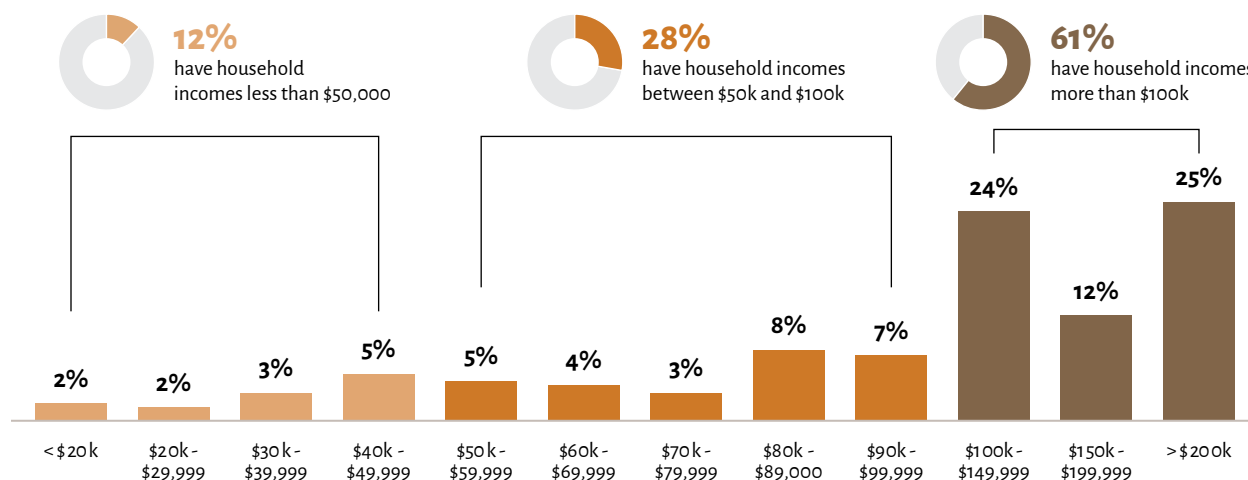
### Visitors by race/ethnicity % of adult visitors



Q25. How do you describe yourself? *Select all that apply* (n = 219)

Figure 11

### Visitors by annual household income % of adult visitors



Q31. Please indicate your total household income before taxes last year (n = 177)

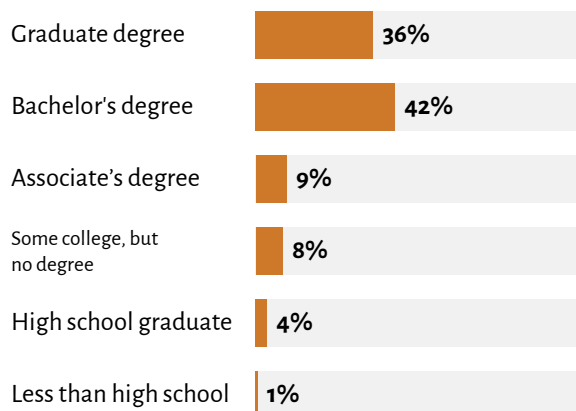
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 estimate.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 estimate.

disability or condition. That's significantly lower than the statewide average (22% of Minnesotans have a disability).<sup>4</sup> To our knowledge this is the first year a question about disabilities has been asked on visitor surveys at any state or regional park or trail. Future research will be needed to better understand park and trail visitors with disabilities and if/how parks and trails can better serve communities of all abilities.

Figure 12

### Visitors by educational attainment % of adult visitors



Q29: What is the highest level of education you have completed? (n = 217)

Figure 13

### Visitors with disabilities



Q30: Do you, or does someone in your group, have a physical, mental or sensory disability or condition? (n = 211)

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Questionnaire. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019.



## Trail Experience

### Nearly all visitors use the trails primarily for mountain biking

The vast majority (96%) of visitors using Cook County's mountain biking trail system are mountain biking. This is not surprising, of course, as the trails are designed for mountain biking and both trailheads also provide other trails for walking, trail running, and nature photography.

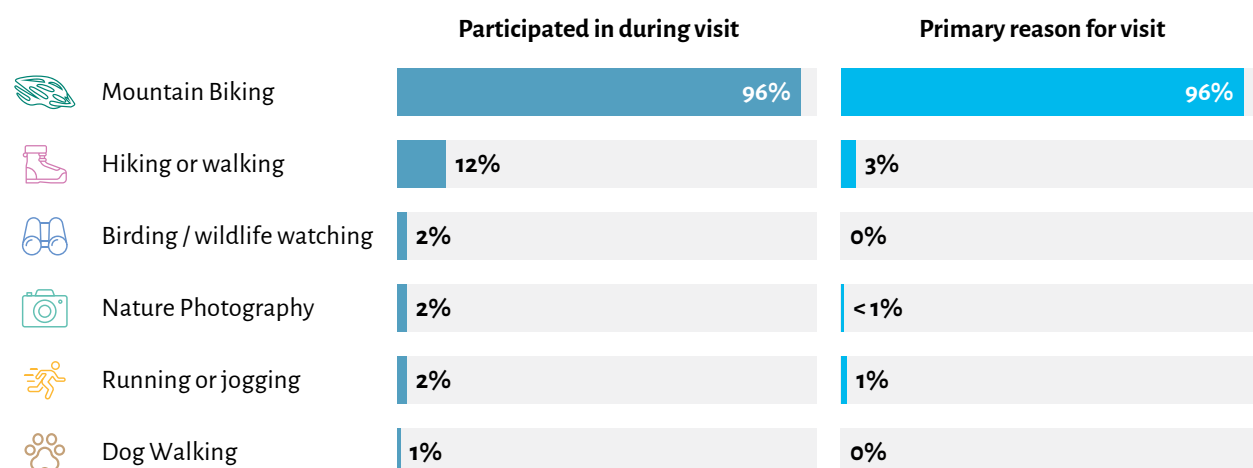
The trails *are* used for activities other than mountain biking, however: 12% of visitors go hiking or walking on the trails, 2% go birding or wildlife watching, 2% do nature photography, 2% go running or jogging, and 1% use the trails for dog walking (Figure 14).

A relatively high number of visitors (13%) reported participating in multiple activities during the same visit. This is partly due to some activities being complementary (e.g., a mountain biker who also takes nature photos). Some visitor groups are also comprised of people doing different activities (e.g., a parent hikes while their children ride). And finally, it's possible some mountain bikers also selected "hiking or walking" partly in jest, indicating they got tired and had to walk part of the way.

Overall, mountain biking was the primary activity for nearly all visitors (96%), whereas only 3% of visitors use the trails primarily

Figure 14

### Participation in trail activities during visit % of all visitors



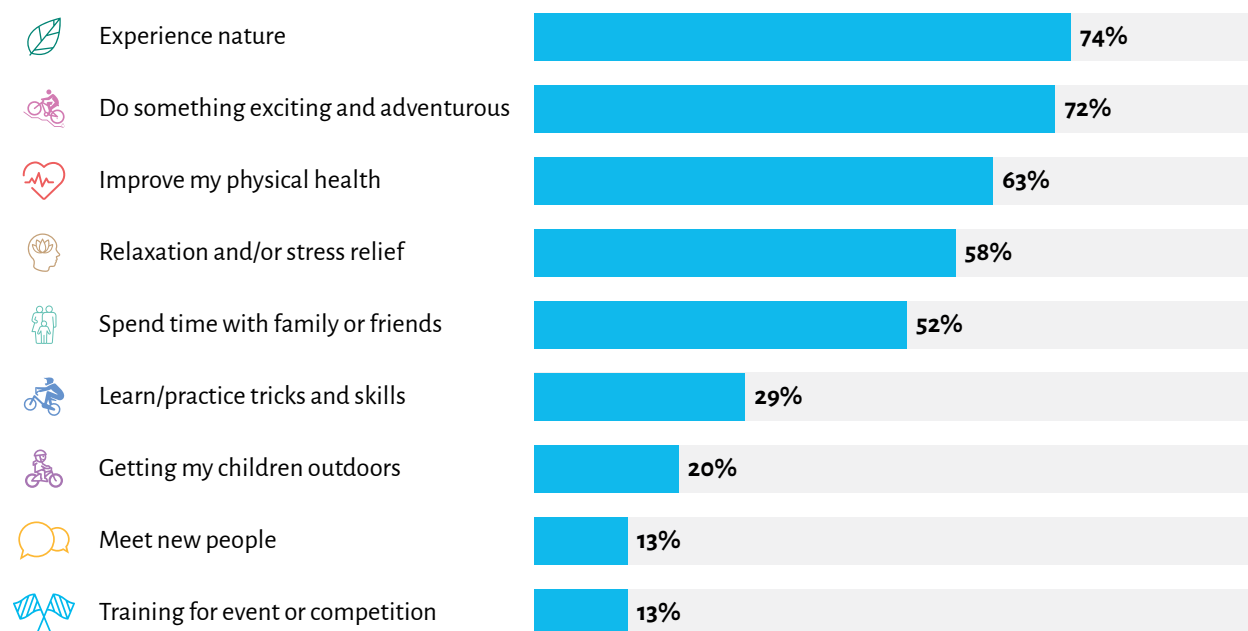
Q1. Which trail activities are you and your group doing during your visit today? *Select all that apply* [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 219)

Q2. Which one of these activities was your main reason for visiting this trail? (n = 219)

Figure 15

## Most important reasons for visiting the trail

% of adult visitors



Q7. What are your most important reasons for visiting the trail today? *Select all that apply* [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 218)

for hiking and only 1% use the trails primarily for running or jogging.

### Nature and adventure top the list of motivations for visiting

Visitors to Cook County’s mountain biking trail system are usually seeking nature and/or adventure. Nearly three-quarters of visitors (74%) say experiencing nature is one of their most important reasons for visiting, while 72% say doing something “exciting and adventurous” is an important reason for visiting (Figure 15).

Health motivations also rank highly among motivations for visiting. Both “improving

physical health” (63%) and “relaxation and/or stress relief” (58%) rank highly among the reasons people visit Cook County’s mountain biking trails.

Social motivations are also important. Over half of visitors (52%) say spending time with family or friends is an important reason for their visit. Most visitors aren’t looking to make new friends on the trail, though. Only 13% of visitors are there to meet new people.

Fewer visitors say training and/or practicing is an important reason for their visit. Under a third of visitors (29%) visit in order to learn or practice tricks and skills, and only



13% of visitors are using the trail to train for an event or competition.

Relatively few visitors (20%) say getting their children outdoors is an important reason for their visit. That's largely due to the relatively few number of people recreating with children, however. Amongst visitors visiting with children, 77% say getting their children outdoors is an important motivation for their visit. Visitors with children are also more likely to say spending time with friends and family is an important reason for visiting (77% vs. 44%,  $p < .001$ ) and less likely to say meeting new people is an important reason for their visit (2% vs. 16%,  $p < .05$ ).

Men and women also report slightly different motivations for visiting Cook County's mountain biking trails. Women are more likely than men to say improving their physical health is an important reason for visiting (77% vs. 59%,  $p < .05$ ). Women are also more likely than men to say spending time with friends and family is an important motivation (72% vs. 45%,  $p < .001$ ). Men are slightly more likely to visit in order to practice tricks and skills (33% vs. 20%,  $p < .10$ ).

While motivations for visiting differ slightly for visitors with children, and for men and women, other subgroups generally share similar reasons for visiting the trail.

Our analysis didn't find any significant differences in motivations for visiting between first time visitors and repeat visitors, generations, or locals and tourists.

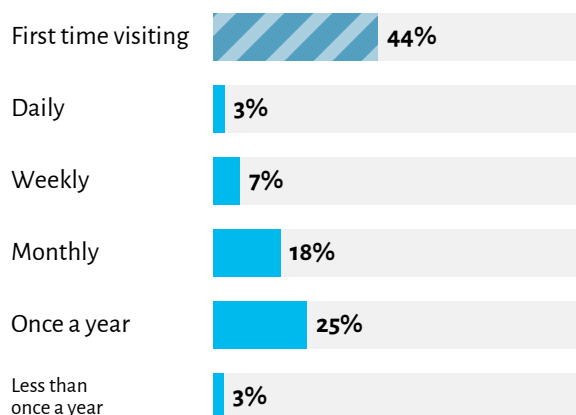
### Nearly half of visitors are first-time visitors

A significant portion of visitors — nearly half (44%) — were visiting Cook County's mountain biking trail system for the first time (Figure 16). Another 25% of visitors visit the trails only once a year, suggesting Cook County's trails serve as a destination for many visitors (72% are either first-time visitors or visit no more than once a year). Relatively few visitors visit weekly (7%) or daily (3%), which correlates closely with the portion of visitors who are local residents (see the "Trail Tourism" section for details).

Figure 16

### Visitation frequency

% of adult visitors



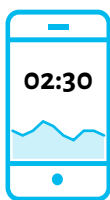
Q9. Approximately how often do you visit this trail during spring, summer and fall? (n = 217)

## Most visitors spend anywhere from 1 to 4 hours on the trail each visit

On average, visitors spend approximately 2.5 hours on the trail per visit (mean = 2.8, 95% C.I. [2.4, 3.3]). Overall, however, there's broad diversity in how long people spend on the trail. Visitors are more-or-less equally likely to spend anywhere between 1 and 4 hours on the trail: 23% of visitors spend between 1 and 2 hours, 27% spend between 2 and 3 hours, 27% spend between 3 and 4 hours, and 19% spend between 4 to 6 hours. (Figure 17).

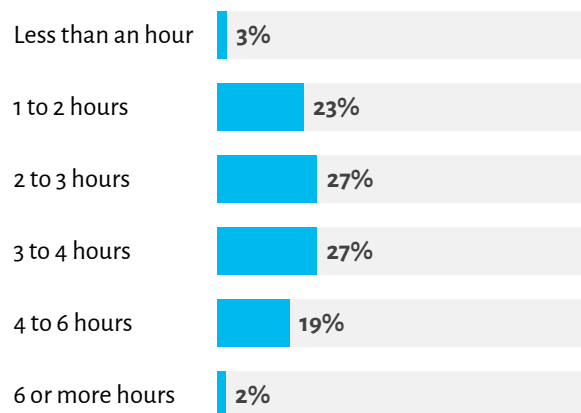
Figure 17

### Duration of trail visit



The average visitor spends **2.5 hours** at the trail

% of all visitors spending \_\_\_\_\_ at the trail



Q8. Approximately how much time did you spend at the trail on this visit? [Hours: Minutes] (n = 218)

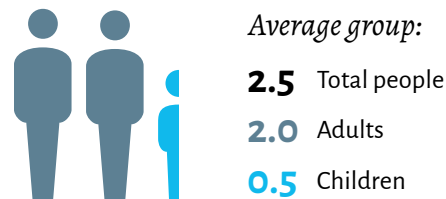
Only a small number of visitors fall on the extremes: 3% of visitors spend less than an hour, and only 2% spend 6 hours or more.

## The majority of visitor groups are pairs or individuals recreating alone

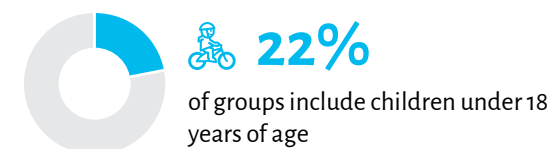
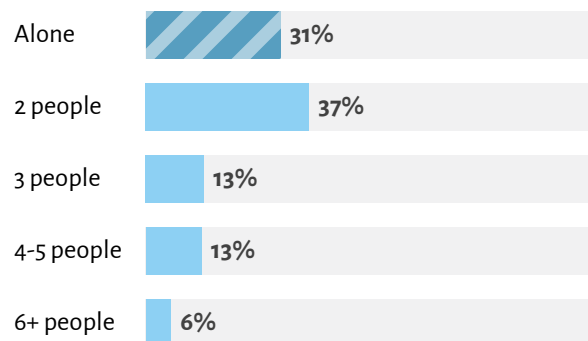
Most visitors (69%) visit Cook County's mountain biking trail system with other people (Figure 18). Most groups are relatively small, however: Half of visitors

Figure 18

### Group size and composition



% of all visitor groups



Q11. How many people are in the group you're recreating with today? [Adults 18 years and older, including yourself; Children under 18] (n = 214)

visit with one or two other people, whereas only 19% of groups are 4 people or larger. Nearly one-third of visitors (31%) visit alone.

The average visitor group size is 2.5 people (mean = 2.5, 95% C.I. [2.2, 2.7]). Approximately one-fifth of visitor groups (22%) include children, and such groups tend to be larger than groups without children. The average group with children has 4.1 people, twice the size of the average group without children (2.0,  $p < 0.001$ ).

### **Visitors give Cook County's mountain biking trail system very high ratings**

Visitors rated their experiences very highly at both Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain, though Britton Peak received higher ratings on average (Figure 19). Nearly all visitors (84%) said their experience at Britton Peak was “very good”, and another 14% rated it as “good”. Only 2% of visitors had a “fair” experience at Britton Peak, and no visitors rated their experience as “poor” or “very poor”.

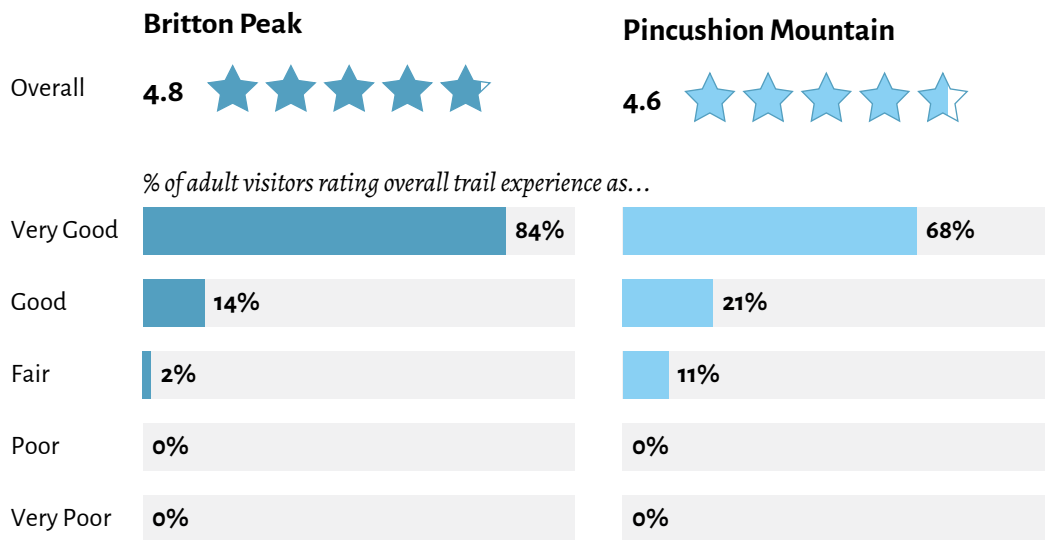
Visitors gave Pincushion Mountain slightly lower ratings. Approximately two-thirds of visitors (68%) said their experience at Pincushion was “very good”, and another 21% rated their experience there as “good”. No visitors rated their experience at Pincushion as “poor” or “very poor,” though 11% said it was only “fair.”

Since Britton Peak's mountain biking trails account for the majority of visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trails, ratings for Cook County's overall system are reflective of Britton Peak's ratings. Across the system as a whole, 82% of visitors rated their experience as “very good” and 14% said their experience was “good.”

Few significant differences in trail ratings were observed across visitor subgroups. Regardless if visitors were men or women, had children with them or not, were first-time or repeat visitors, or were tourists or locals, all the subgroups we analyzed gave the trails similarly high ratings. This speaks well of the trail system as a whole and its ability to appeal to a wide range of visitors. One notable exception is that advanced and expert mountain bikers had slightly better experiences than beginner and intermediate riders (88% very good vs. 78% very good,  $p < .10$ ). This difference is relatively small, and both groups still gave the trails very high marks overall, but the findings suggest adding more beginner-level trails could increase Cook County's mountain biking trail system's overall appeal.

Figure 19

## Visitor ratings of trail experience



Q10. Overall, how would you rate your trail experience today? (Britton Peak: n = 190; Pincushion: n = 34)

Note: Overall rating based on scale where 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, and 1 = very poor





## Rider Characteristics

### Nearly all mountain bikers are riding their own bike

Nearly all adult riders (94%) on Cook County's mountain biking trail systems are riding their own bike (Figure 20). Those not riding their own bike are either riding a rental bike (5%) or borrowing a bike from a friend or family member (2%). Approximately one tenth of riders (11%) are riding a fat-tire bike.

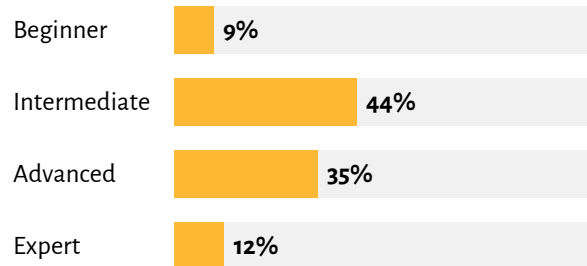
### Most mountain bikers on Cook County's trails are intermediate riders

A slight majority of riders (53%) on Cook County's mountain biking trails classify themselves as beginner or intermediate riders. Intermediate riders make up the largest share of visitors (44%), while 35% of visitors have advanced riding skills (Figure 21). Relatively few visitors are beginners (9%) or expert riders (12%).

Figure 21

### Mountain biking skill level

% of adult visitors, mountain bikers only



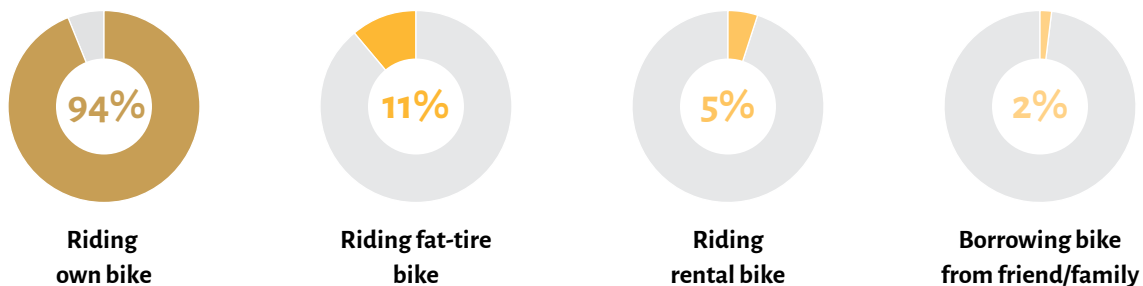
Q4. What is your mountain biking skill level? (n = 209)

Visitor demographics and trip characteristics vary across mountain biking skill levels. More advanced riders, for example, are significantly more likely to be men (e.g., 90% of advanced/expert riders are male). More advanced riders also have slightly higher incomes (e.g., 75% of

Figure 20

### Bike characteristics

% of adult visitors, mountain bikers only



Q5. Are you riding a fat-tire bike today? (n = 209)

Q6. Are you riding your own bike today? (n = 210)

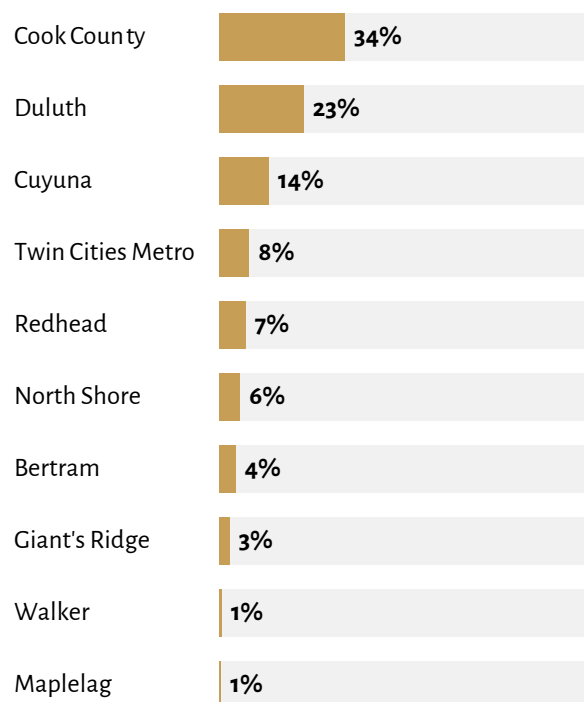
advanced/expert riders have household incomes over \$100,000, compared to 60% of beginner/intermediate riders,  $p < .05$ ).

Figure 22

## Favorite places to mountain bike



% of visitors who say \_\_\_\_\_ is their favorite place to go mountain biking in Minnesota...



Q3. Do you have a favorite place in Minnesota to go mountain biking? (n = 207)  
Q3a. If so, where? [Open ended response] (n = 131)

Advanced riders also have slightly different motivations for visiting. Advanced/expert riders are slightly more likely than beginner/intermediate riders to visit for “relaxation and stress relief” (63% vs. 52%,  $p < .01$ ) and more likely to be training for an event or competition (20% vs. 4%,  $p < .01$ ). Beginner/intermediate riders are more likely to be visiting in order to spend time with friends and family (58% vs. 44%,  $p < .05$ ).<sup>1</sup>

## Mountain bikers on Cook County's trails have a wide variety of favorite places to ride

Understanding where visitors' favorite place to ride provides an interesting snapshot of the top mountain biking facilities in Minnesota and also provides a sense of comparable trail systems that have a similar visitor base as Cook County. Most visitors (34%) said Cook County was their favorite place in Minnesota to go mountain biking (and another 6% said the North Shore, without differentiating between Cook and Lake counties).

Beyond the North Shore, a wide variety of places were listed (Figure 22): Duluth (identified by 23% of visitors) and Cuyuna (14%) topped the list, followed by various trails in the Twin Cities Metro (8%), Redhead (7%), Bertram Lakes (4%) and Giant's Ridge (3%). The City of Walker's mountain biking trails and Maplelag also received mentions.

<sup>1</sup> Skill levels on the survey were self reported, and the survey did not provide skill level definitions or descriptions. As such, results are based on each respondent's perception of their skills and their perception of what each skill level entails. Results should be interpreted with this caveat in mind.



## Trail Tourism

### The vast majority of visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trails are tourists

Nearly all visitors (87%) to Cook County's mountain biking trail system are tourists, defined as someone who is 50 miles or more away from home and/or staying at least one night away from home (Figure 23). The majority of visitors are overnight visitors (72%), while 15% of visitors are on day trips. Local visitors are a small minority on the trails, accounting for only 13% of visitors.

Visitors tend to report similar trail experiences — and motivations — regardless if they're tourists or locals. Tourists and locals are equally likely to visit with children, recreate in similarly sized groups, give the trails similar ratings, spend similar amounts of time on the trail, and give similar reasons for visiting. On average, locals and tourists are also of similar ages and have similar levels of educational achievement. Tourist visitors do have significantly higher incomes, however. The majority of tourists (73%) have household incomes over \$100,000 compared to only 35% of locals ( $p < .001$ ).

### Visitors to Cook County's mountain biking trail system come from all over the country

Cook County's mountain biking trails host visitors from all over the country: 19 different states were represented among

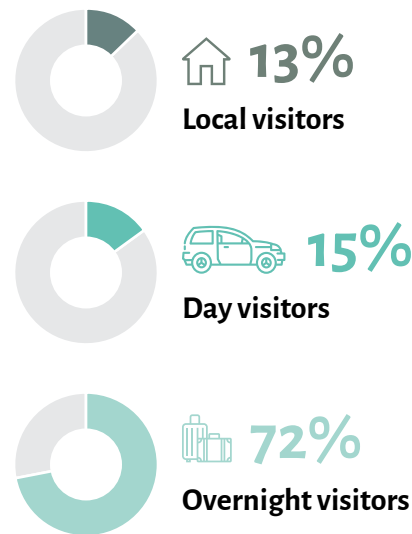
survey respondents (Figure 24). Visitors came from as far away as Alaska, California, and Florida.

While visitors arrived from both coasts, the vast majority of visitors were from Minnesota and other Midwestern states. Most visitors (85%) were from Minnesota, followed by Wisconsin (5%) and Illinois (3%). Perhaps surprisingly, relatively few visitors were from other neighboring states: Iowa,

Figure 23

### Visitor travel segments

% of all visitors



Q15. Do you live more than 50 miles from this trail? (n = 219)

Q16. Are you on a trip where you have or plan to stay at least one night away from home? (n = 219)

Note: "Local Visitor" defined as someone who lives within 50 miles and is not spending a night away from home. "Day Visitor" is someone who lives more than 50 miles away but is not spending a night away from home. "Overnight visitor" is someone spending at least one night away from home, regardless of how far away they live.

North Dakota, and Michigan combined to account for only 2% of all visitors. Our analysis of all vehicles leaving and entering the parking area during surveying hours found a similarly low percentage of visitors from Iowa, Michigan and the Dakotas.

Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic severely restricted international travel during the 2021 summer season. Consequently, every visitor surveyed was from the United States. Had the northern border been open, it's likely that a significant number

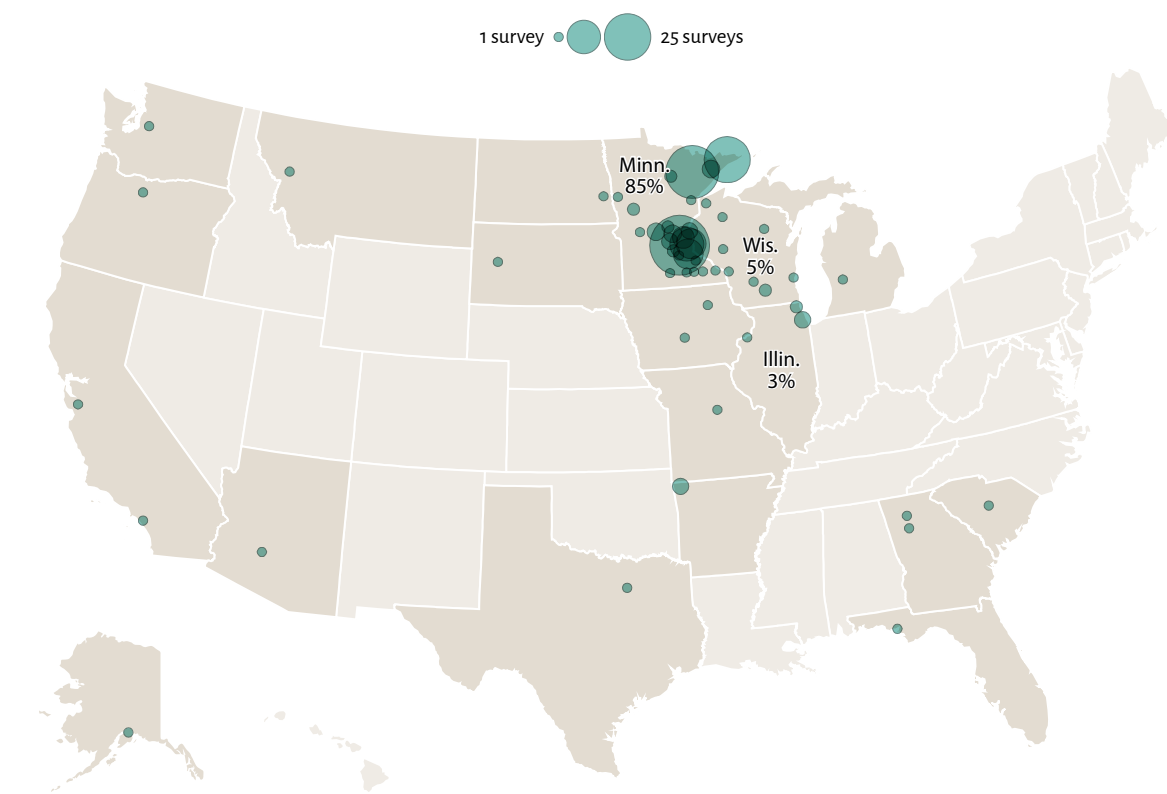
of Canadians would have been visiting Cook County and using the mountain biking trails. As such, our 2021 data likely underestimates the full extent that Cook County's trails serve out-of-town visitors during "normal" years.

### **The Twin Cities are Cook County's primary tourist market**

Nearly half of visitors (47%) to Cook County's mountain biking trail system are from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (Figure 25). Within the Twin Cities metro, Hennepin County accounts for the most

Figure 24

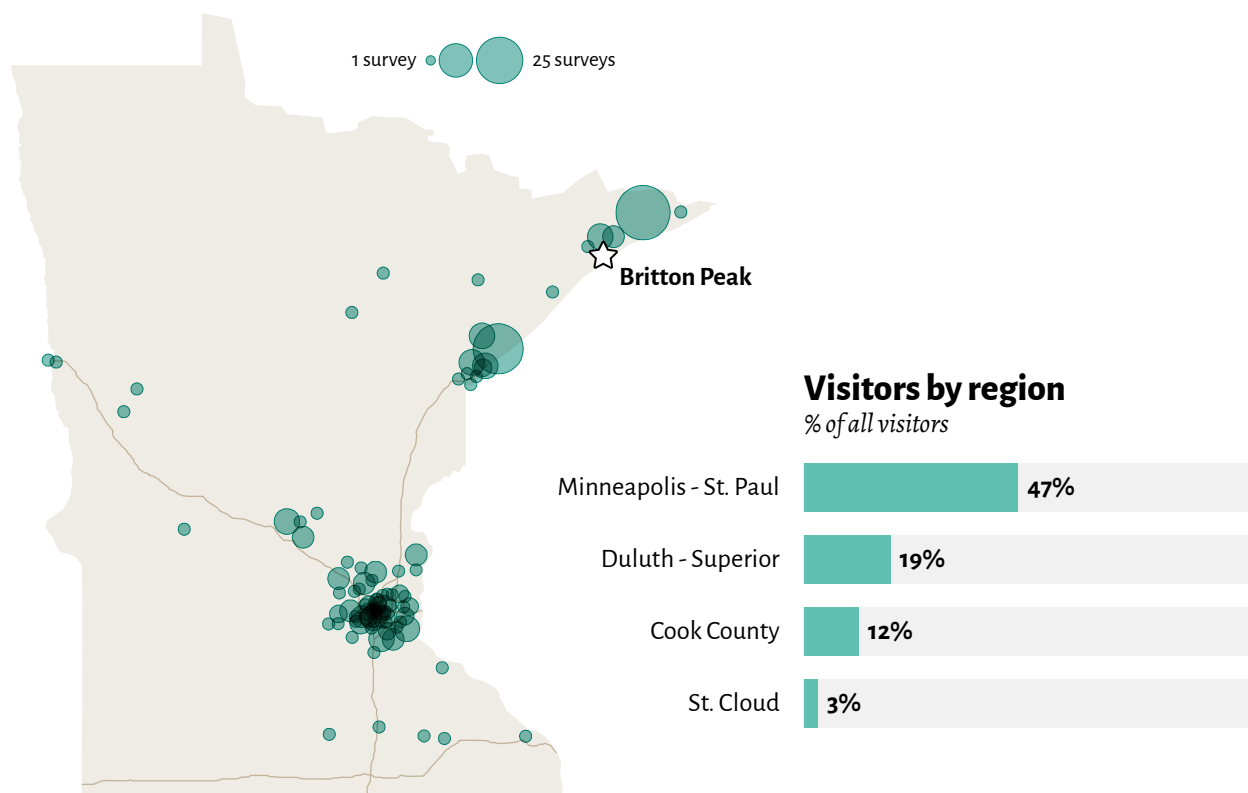
### **Where visitors are from: National map**



21. What is the zip code of your home address, or what is your country of residence? (n = 218)

Figure 25

## Where visitors are from: Minnesota map



21. What is the zip code of your home address, or what is your country of residence? (n = 218)

visitors (44% of metro visitors), followed by Ramsey County (14%), Dakota County (12%) and Washington County (11%).

After the Twin Cities, the next largest visitor markets are Duluth-Superior (19% of all visitors) and Cook County itself (12% of all visitors). Other regions make up only small shares of visitors. Approximately 3% of visitors are from St. Cloud. The Chicago Metropolitan Area, where 2% of visitors are from, is the largest out-of-state market.

Not surprisingly, day tourists and overnight tourists tend to be from different places. Nearly all visitors from the Twin Cities metro tend to stay in the area overnight, though 7% of them make a long day trip of it. Conversely, only about half of visitors from the Duluth-Superior area (45%) choose to stay in Cook County overnight.

### Overnight visitors stay in a wide variety of accommodations during their visit

Cook County is home to numerous campgrounds, both public and private, and mountain biking visitors make good use of them. Approximately one-third

of the overnight tourists (34%) stay at campgrounds during their stay (Figure 26). The majority of overnight visitors (54%), however, stay in some type of commercial lodging, whether resorts (20%), Airbnb or VRBO rentals (20%), hotels or motels (13%) or Bed & Breakfasts (1%). Approximately 1 in 5 overnight visitors stay in personal cabins or vacation homes, either those owned by a friend or family member (12%) or their own property (10%).

### Overnight visitors most often spend between 1 and 4 nights in Cook County

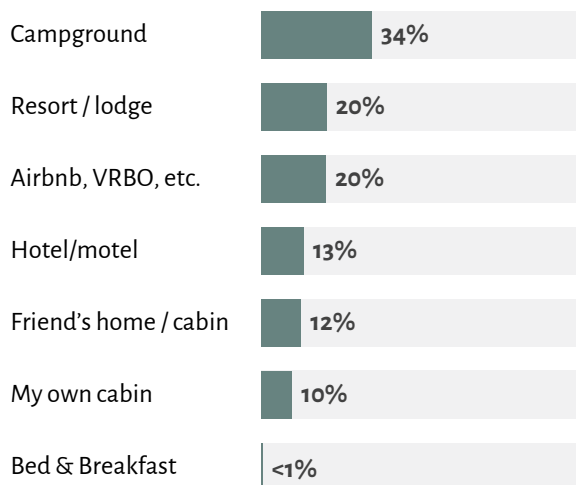
Approximately a third (37%) of overnight visitors spend 1-2 nights in the area, and another third (35%) spend 3-4 nights (Figure 26). The final third of overnight visitors spend between 1 and 2 weeks in the area: 12% spend 5-6 nights in the area, while 15% spend 7-13 nights. Spending more than two weeks (i.e., more than 13 nights) in the area is extremely rare (2% of overnight tourists).

### Most tourists say the trails themselves were a significant reason they decided to visit Cook County

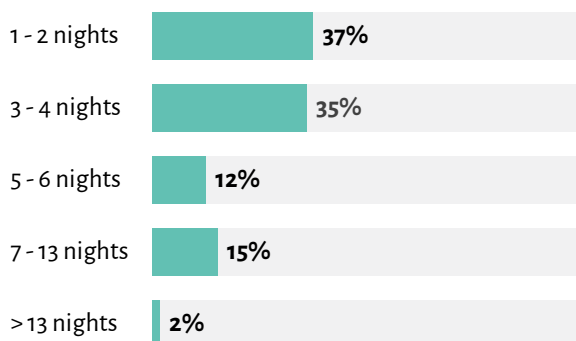
There's all kinds of reasons tourists choose to visit different areas. Some tourists visit for a specific reason (e.g., to ride the trail everybody's talking about), others visit for a complex mix of reasons (e.g. the area has great food, stunning scenery and lots of activity options to choose from) and others visit for completely unrelated reasons (e.g., they're attending a wedding and jump on the trail during their free time).

Figure 26

### Visitor overnight accommodations % of overnight visitors



### Trip Length % of overnight visitors



Q18. How many total nights do you plan to spend in this area during your trip? (n = 156)

Q19. What type of overnight accommodations are you staying in during your trip? *Select all that apply*

[Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 170)

Understanding whether tourists on Cook County's mountain biking trails are visiting the area primarily for the trails themselves, or if they see the trails as just one of many attractions in the area, is helpful for tourism marketing and planning.



For tourists on Cook County's mountain biking trails, the trails themselves are usually at least part of the reason for their trip (Figure 27). Amongst all tourists, 35% said the trail was the primary reason they visited the area, and another 22% said the trail was a significant reason. Only 19% of tourists said they would have visited Cook County regardless of the mountain biking trails. Day tourists, unsurprisingly, are significantly more likely to say the trails were the primary reason for their visit than overnight visitors. Nearly all day visitors (90%) said the trail was the primary reason for their visit, compared to only 25% of overnight visitors. But even though overnight visitors have more nuanced reasons for visiting Cook County, the mountain biking trails are a significant factor for most of them. Half of overnight visitors said the trail was a significant (or primary) reason for their visit, and only 23% of overnight visitors would have visited Cook County even without the mountain biking trails.

### **There's a wide range in how far in advance tourists plan their visits**

Tourists on Cook County's mountain biking trails are nearly as likely to have planned their trip within one week of arriving (25% of tourist visitors) as they were to have planned their trip more than 3 months in advance (19% of tourist visitors) (Figure 27). Overall, there is split among trip planners. Most trips were either what might be called

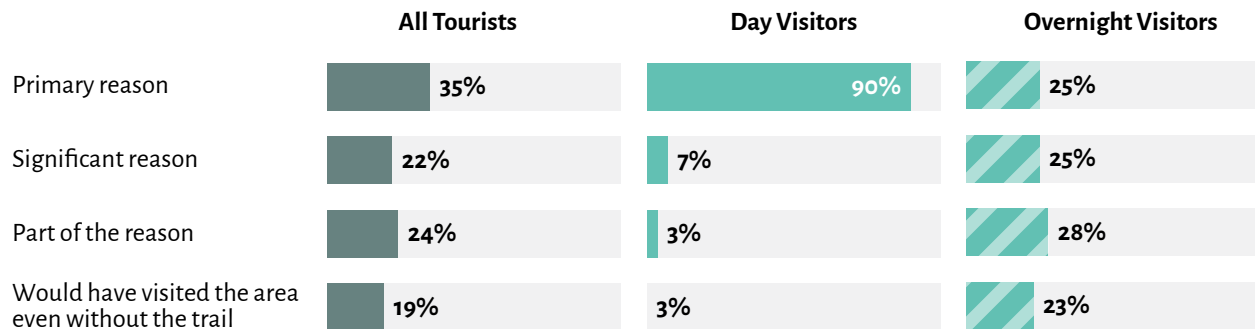
"last minute" (56% of trips were planned in less than a month) or "long range plans" (34% of trips were planned more than 2 months in advance). Only 9% of trips were planned 1 to 2 months in advance.

Day visitors were, again unsurprisingly, significantly more likely to make their plans last minute. Half of day visitors (52%) made their plans less than a week in advance, and 38% made their plans between 1 and 2 weeks in advance. Only 16% of day visitors planned their trips more than 2 weeks in advance. In contrast, two-thirds (66%) of overnight visitors made their plans more than 2 weeks in advance.

Figure 27

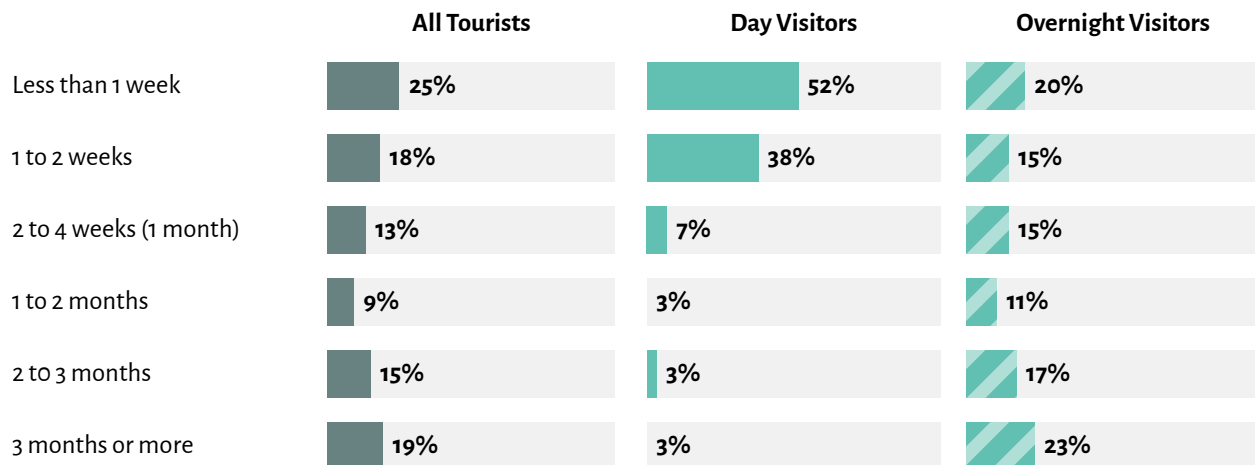
## Importance of trail in decision to visit Cook County

% of adult visitors, tourist visitors only



## How far in advance tourists planned their trip

% of adult visitors, tourist visitors only



Q17. How important was the trail in deciding to visit this area? (n = 182)

Q20. How far in advance did you plan this trip? (n = 181)

Note: "Tourist" defined as visitor who lives more than 50 miles away and/or is spending a night away from home. "Day Visitor" is someone who lives more than 50 miles away but is not spending a night away from home. "Overnight visitor" is someone spending at least one night away from home, regardless of how far away they live.



## Trip Planning

### Visitors use a wide variety of information sources to learn about the trails

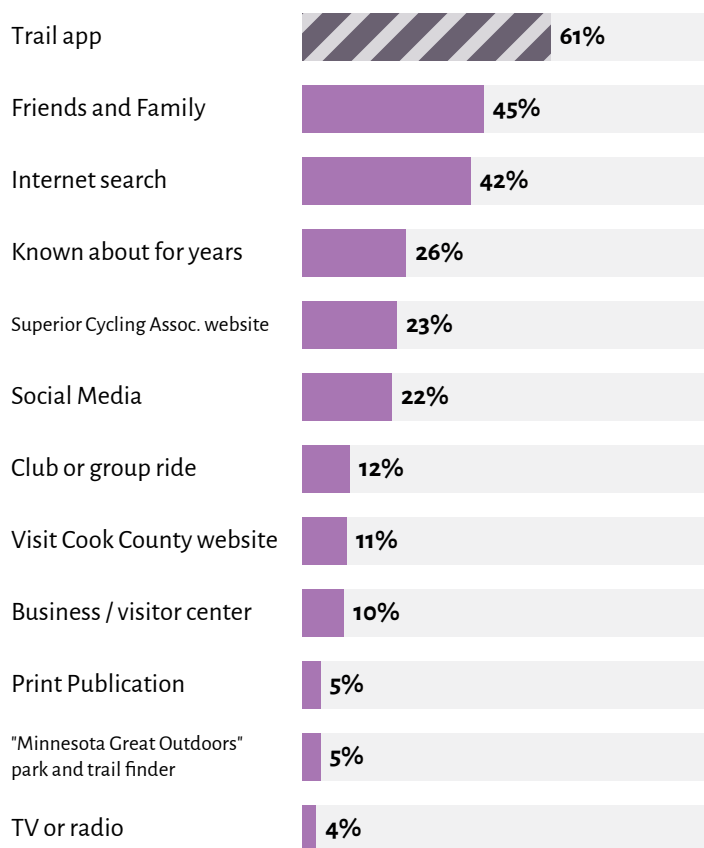
Over half of visitors (61%) use a trail app to get information about Cook County's mountain biking trail system. No other information source is used by a majority of visitors, though friends and family (45%) and Internet searches (42%) are also

relatively common information sources (Figure 28). Other information sources are only used by a minority of visitors. About a quarter of users have known about the trail for years (26%), used the Superior Cycling Association's website (23%) or looked up the trail on social media sites such as Facebook

Figure 28

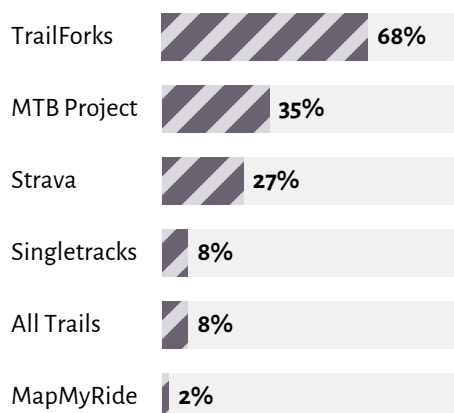
### Where visitors get information about the trail

% of adult visitors who use information source



### Most popular trail apps

Of trail app users, % who use...



### Use of trail apps depends on skill level

% of adults who use trail app



Q12. What information sources have you used to learn about this trail? *Select all that apply* [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 219)

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ .

or Instagram (22%). Club rides (12%), the Visit Cook County website (11%) and recommendations from local businesses (10%) were all used by about 1 in 10 visitors. Very few visitors use “traditional” media outlets such as print publications (5%) or TV and radio (4%) to learn about Cook County’s mountain biking trails, and a similarly small number (5%) used the “Minnesota Great Outdoors” park and trail finder website.

Among visitors who use trail apps, Trailforks (used by 68% of app users), MTB Project (35%) and Strava (27%) dominate the market. Relatively few trail app users use Singletracks (8%), All Trails (8%) or MapMyRide (2%).<sup>1</sup>

The relatively high use of trail apps should be of interest to trail managers and researchers alike, since trail apps track valuable data that can inform how trail systems are used. Both Trailforks and Strava, for example, provide heat maps of trail use based on data provided by their subscribers. Such trail app data is undoubtedly informative, but our data suggests it should be interpreted cautiously. Across numerous measures, trail app users are unrepresentative of visitors as a whole. For example, visitors who use trail apps tend to have higher skill levels than visitors who don’t use apps (Figure 28). Compared to the average trail visitor, trail app users

are also more likely to be male, have higher education levels, higher incomes, are more likely to be tourists and are more likely to be training for an event. Data from trail apps should be interpreted with this context in mind.

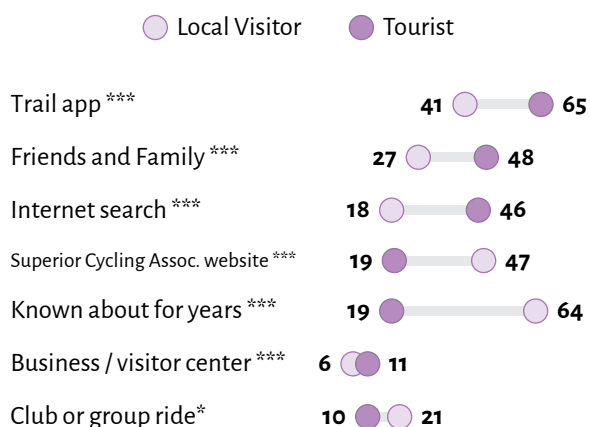
### Locals and tourists get their information about the trails from different places

There are several differences between how locals and tourists find their information about Cook County’s mountain biking trails (Figure 29). Many of these differences are intuitive. Locals are far more likely to have “known about the trail for years,” for

Figure 29

### Local and tourist use of selected information sources

% of visitors using information source



Q12. What information sources have you used to learn about this trail? Select all that apply [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 219)

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ .

Additionally, no statistically significant differences were found in locals and tourist use of social media, the Visit Cook County website, print publications, the “Minnesota Great Outdoors” park and trail finder, or TV and radio.

<sup>1</sup> The percentages don’t add up to 100% because many trail app users report using more than one app.

example (64% vs. 19%,  $p < .001$ ). But some of the differences, or lack thereof, are interesting. For example, tourists aren't any more likely to use Visit Cook County's website than locals are. Conversely, local visitors are significantly more likely to use the Superior Cycling Association's website (47% vs. 19%,  $p < .001$ ). This is presumably because more locals are familiar with the Superior Cycling Association, but also speaks to a missed opportunity; many tourists would almost certainly find value in the information provided on the association's website.

### Approximately two-thirds of visitors look for information about the trail before their visit

Not only do tourists and locals use different information sources, tourists are also more likely than locals to look for information in the first place (presumably because they're less familiar with the trails). Overall, approximately two-thirds of visitors (63%) looked for information about the trail before their visit (Figure 30). But that number rises to 70% for tourists, compared to only 21% of locals ( $p < .001$ ).

### When visitors look for information, they're most often looking for trail maps and mileage

Trail maps and mileage, searched for by 86% of visitors who looked for information, are by far the most frequent information visitors look for before visiting (Figure 31). Many visitors (51%) also search for trail difficulty ratings and trail reviews

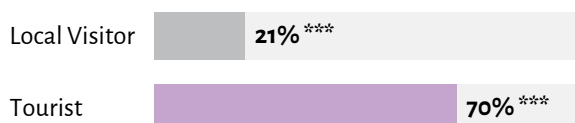
Figure 30

## Pre-trip planning information



### Tourists are more likely than locals to look for information before their visit

% of adult visitors who searched for information before their visit



Q13. To prepare for your visit today, did you or your group look for information about this trail before you came? (n = 219)

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ .

and photos (39%). Trail apps make it very easy for riders to find trail maps, degree of difficulty and trail reviews, and thus it makes sense they top the list of where visitors look for information.

After information about the trails themselves, visitors are most likely to search for trip related information. Nearly half of visitors (46%) look up travel directions and 29% look for parking information.

Visitors also look for a lot of other types of information before they visit, but much less frequently. Approximately 14% of visitors look up trail rules, and 11% look up lodging

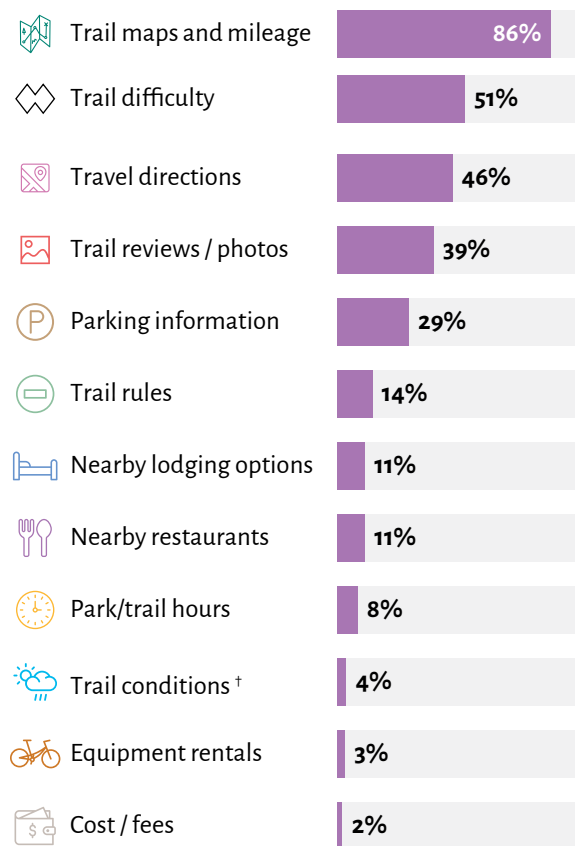
and restaurant options. Fewer than 10% of visitors look up trail hours, equipment rentals, and fee information.

Of note, 4% of visitors volunteered that they looked up trail conditions (or weather) under the “other” option. Not including trail conditions on the list of options was an oversight, and had it been included significantly more visitors would likely have checked it.

Figure 31

## What information do visitors search for before their visit?

*Of adult visitors who looked for information before their visit, % who searched for...*



Q14. What information did you search for before your visit today?  
Select all that apply [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 139)

<sup>†</sup> “Trail conditions” was a frequent response to the open-ended “other” category. Had “trail conditions” been included as an answer choice, frequency would likely be higher.



# Methodology

## Overview

Data in this report is drawn from two complementary studies conducted in the Cook County mountain biking system during the summer of 2021. First, to measure system use and traffic patterns, automated trail counters were installed at four locations across the system. Second, a visitor intercept survey contacted visitors at the Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain trailheads to collect responses on trail experience, trip characteristics, and demographics.

Trail counters were installed for varying lengths of time between May 29, 2021 (the Saturday before Memorial Day) and September 6 (Labor Day). Visitor surveys were collected between June 25, 2021 and September 19, 2021. Both studies were designed to be representative of the summer season, defined as the Saturday before Memorial Day through Labor Day. Focusing visitor studies on the summer season coincides with the peak visitation season and ensures comparability with other visitor studies conducted in regional and state parks and trails across Minnesota.<sup>1</sup>

While beyond the scope of this study, it should be noted that Cook County's mountain biking trails are used all year, and use during other seasons (particularly the fall) may be significant. Readers should understand this report does not quantify the full, year-round regional impact of Cook County's mountain biking trail system.

## Trail Use Estimates

Data on trail use was collected using EcoCounter PYRO boxes, which are passive-infrared automated trail counters that detect trail users as they pass by. The passive-infrared counters count all users, and occasionally wildlife, that pass by and do not differentiate between bikers and hikers. Field staff validated the counters after installation by hiking or riding past the counter 50 times and ensuring it was counting properly.

The Britton Peak trailhead was chosen as the primary trail count location in consultation with the Superior Cycling Association. A trail counter was installed on the Shortstacker Trail at Britton Peak permanently for the entirety of the summer season. The Shortstacker Trail is a one-way

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<sup>1</sup> See "Regional Parks System Visitor Study Report" (Metropolitan Council, November 2016), "2017 State Park Visitor Survey" (Minnesota DNR, November 2017), and "2019 Minnesota State Trail Visitor Survey" (Minnesota DNR, July 2020).

loop trail that all users must use to access the trail system, and thus was a good choice to capture the vast majority of visitors.

In addition to the permanent counting location on Shortstacker, short-duration counts were conducted on the Jackpot Trail, Highclimber Climb, and Talus Trail at Pincushion Mountain (Figure 32). Short-duration counts ranged in length from two to four weeks. All trail counting locations were determined in consultation with the Superior Cycling Association.

At the end of the counting season, trail count data was downloaded, checked and cleaned. Several unusually high counts were recorded during overnight hours (between 10pm and 5am), assumed to be caused by wildlife, and removed from the dataset. We then analyzed data at each trail location for daily traffic patterns, hourly traffic patterns, and estimated summer average daily traffic (SADT). Fact sheets for each trail count location are provided in Appendix A.

SADT for short-duration count locations was estimated using the day-of-year factoring method. The day-of-year factoring method is a standard method to extrapolate short-duration non-motorized traffic counts because it captures the effects of local conditions such as weather, events and holidays.<sup>2</sup> Under the day-of-year factoring

Figure 32

## Trail counting locations and dates

Location	Dates	Duration (days)
<b>Britton Peak</b>		
Shortstacker	5/29/21 - 9/6/21	101
Jackpot	8/16/21 - 8/29/21	14
<b>Lutsen</b>		
Highclimber	8/16/21 - 8/29/21	14
<b>Pincushion Mountain</b>		
Talus	7/16/21 - 8/14/21	30

method, observed traffic at a short-duration site is assumed to equal the proportion of season-long traffic observed at a nearby location (i.e., “reference site”) where counts are collected for the entire season. We used the counts collected on the Shortstacker Trail as the reference site to extrapolate data collected elsewhere on the system. For example, if traffic between August 16 and August 29 accounted for 12% of total summer traffic on the Shortstacker Trail, it’s assumed that observed traffic on the Jackpot Trail during the same time period also accounts for 12% of total summer traffic on the Jackpot Trail. This method results in estimates with a margin of error of approximately 10-15% for each short-duration trail count location.

All summer traffic estimates are specific to 2021 and are not necessarily representative

<sup>2</sup> Minge, E., Falero, C., Lindsey, G., Petesch, M., & Vorvick, T. (2017). *Bicycle and Pedestrian Data Collection Manual*. Minnesota Department of Transportation.

of the average year. Mountain biking and hiking traffic is highly sensitive to weather, which can vary widely from year-to-year.

### **Questionnaire development**

The questionnaire was designed through a collaborative process between the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) and Parks & Trails Council (P&TC). GMRPTC designed a draft questionnaire based on the University of Minnesota's *Handbook for Minnesota Parks and Trails Surveying* and previous surveys conducted by the Metropolitan Council.<sup>3</sup> P&TC reviewed the questionnaire and offered recommendations to improve questionnaire clarity, focus and length. Whenever possible, questions were designed to collect data that is comparable to visitor survey data collected by the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Prior to finalizing the questionnaire, the instrument was pilot tested with seven volunteers at two separate Minnesota trail facilities. Results from the pilot were used to re-word several questions for clarity. The final questionnaire was 20 questions long, plus 13 additional questions asked only of specific users (e.g., mountain bikers, tourists). Question topics included trail activities, overall quality of the trail

experience, group characteristics, trip planning, information sources, and demographics (Appendix B). On average, respondents took 5-6 minutes to complete the survey.

To limit potential language bias, the questionnaire was translated and made available in English, Spanish and Somali. All respondents completed the survey in English.

Questionnaires were administered to visitors on Samsung 8" tablets using QuestionPro (a professional online survey software). The survey was stored on the tablet and did not require Wi-Fi or cellular phone service. Skips and data validation were programmed into the survey to help speed up completion and improve accuracy of data entered by the visitor. Survey responses were stored on the tablet and later uploaded to P&TC's online account. Paper surveys were also available as a backup or if requested. The vast majority of surveys (97%) were completed electronically on the tablet.

### **Data collection protocol**

The visitor survey was conducted by staff and volunteers of P&TC. All surveyors attended a training session and received an 18-page training manual that reviewed

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<sup>3</sup> Pradhananga, A., Davenport, M.A., Saari, H. (2016). *Handbook for Minnesota Parks and Trails Visitor Surveying*. University of Minnesota, Department of Forest Resources.

project purpose, study design and procedures, checklists and frequently encountered issues.

Surveys were conducted at both the Britton Peak and Pincushion Mountain trailheads (see Figure 2 on page 3). Both trailheads serve as an access point to both singletrack mountain biking trails and the Superior Hiking Trail. Only adult visitors (age 18 and older) using the singletrack trail system were eligible to take the survey, and surveyors were trained to screen all visitors to determine visitor eligibility (Appendix B). If visitors arrived as a group, the adult with the most recent birthday was asked to complete the survey.

To welcome visitors at each survey location, a “survey station” was set up at the beginning of each survey shift. The station provided a visual presence for the surveyor and included a large “Visitor Survey” sign, free water, maps, and a bag for visitors to throw away trash (Figure 33).

During each survey shift, surveyors made every effort possible to stop and talk to every visitor entering or leaving the trailhead. Surveyors would approach each visitor group, introduce themselves, explain the purpose of the survey and ask them to participate. If the visitor agreed they were handed the tablet and self-administered the questionnaire. If the visitor asked

to be administered the questionnaire verbally, the surveyor did so by reading the questionnaire verbatim and recording responses on the tablet. All visitors were assured their participation was completely voluntary and that their identities would be anonymous. Visitors who refused to participate were logged by the surveyor to track potential non-response bias.

In instances where high traffic volumes made it impractical to approach every visitor, the “next to pass method” was used to select respondents. During these periods, surveyors simply selected and approached the next group or person to pass the survey site after a questionnaire had been completed by someone else.

### **Sampling**

A stratified sampling plan was developed to ensure the survey sample was as representative of summer visitors as possible. Surveys were conducted for a

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Figure 33

### **Visitor survey station**



Figure 34

## Survey dates, times and completions

Date	Day	Location	Time	Hours	Completed
6/25/21	Fri	Britton Peak	1:45pm - 5:45pm	4.0	11
6/26/21	Sat	Pincushion Mountain	9am - 3pm	6.0	12
7/12/21	Mon	Britton Peak	12pm - 2pm	2.0	6
7/14/21	Wed	Pincushion Mountain	12pm - 4pm	4.0	3
7/15/21	Thu	Britton Peak	10am - 12pm	2.0	3
7/15/21	Thu	Pincushion Mountain	1pm - 2pm	1.0	2
7/18/21	Sun	Britton Peak	4pm - 6pm	2.0	3
7/22/21	Thu	Britton Peak	2pm - 4pm	2.0	4
7/23/21	Fri	Britton Peak	12:30pm - 6pm	5.5	10
7/24/21	Sat	Pincushion Mountain	9:30am - 3pm	5.5	2
7/25/21	Sun	Britton Peak	10am - 12pm	2.0	5
8/2/21	Mon	Britton Peak	8am - 10am	2.0	0
8/3/21	Tue	Britton Peak	1pm - 6:30pm	5.5	9
8/4/21	Wed	Britton Peak	9:30am - 3pm	5.5	7
8/6/21	Fri	Britton Peak	12pm - 2pm	2.0	4
8/7/21	Sat	Britton Peak	10am - 3pm	5.0	11
8/8/21	Sun	Pincushion Mountain	9:00am - 11:30 am	2.5	0
8/8/21	Sun	Britton Peak	12:00pm - 3:00 pm	3.0	6
8/10/21	Tue	Pincushion Mountain	10am - 2pm	2.0	1
8/13/21	Fri	Britton Peak	8am - 10am	2.0	2
8/14/21	Sat	Britton Peak	2pm - 4pm	2.0	9
8/15/21	Sun	Britton Peak	2pm - 7pm	5.0	11
8/16/21	Mon	Britton Peak	9am - 5pm	8.0	8
8/25/21	Wed	Britton Peak	2pm - 4pm	2.0	7
8/26/21	Thu	Pincushion Mountain	4pm - 5pm	1.0	0
8/28/21	Sat	Britton Peak	11:30am - 4pm	4.5	3
8/29/21	Sun	Britton Peak	10am - 3pm	5.0	2
8/30/21	Mon	Britton Peak	11am - 3:30pm	5.5	6
8/31/21	Tue	Britton Peak	2pm - 4pm	2.0	3
9/1/21	Wed	Britton Peak	10am - 12pm	2.0	3
9/4/21	Sat	Britton Peak	1pm - 3pm	2.0	6
9/5/21	Sun	Britton Peak	10am - 12pm	2.0	8
9/9/21	Thu	Britton Peak	12pm - 5pm	5.0	8
9/10/21	Fri	Pincushion Mountain	10:30am - 12pm	2.5	0
9/10/21	Fri	Britton Peak	1pm - 4pm	3.0	6
9/11/21	Sat	Britton Peak	9am - 2:30pm	5.5	10
9/17/21	Fri	Britton Peak	11am - 4:30pm	5.5	7
9/18/21	Sat	Britton Peak	9am - 3pm	6.0	15
9/19/21	Sun	Britton Peak	9am - 1pm	4.0	6

total of 138 hours stratified across high-use and low-use periods (Figure 34). Surveying hours were split between weekends (45%) and weekdays (55%). On average, 1.4 surveys were completed per hour on weekdays and 1.8 surveys were completed per hour on weekends. Completed surveys were split equally between weekends and weekdays (50% vs. 50%).

### Response Rate and Margin of Error

A total of 225 eligible visitor groups were approached and asked to complete the questionnaire. Of those, 219 visitors completed a survey for a response rate of 97%. This response rate is exceptionally high and sufficient to allay any concerns of non-response bias (in which results are biased due to systematic differences between people who are willing to complete the survey and those who are not).

Whenever a visitor declined to participate, the surveyor recorded the group size, primary activity and inquired if they would be willing to quickly answer four short “non-response questions.”<sup>4</sup> The purpose of these questions was to test if visitors who declined to participate were systematically different from those who participated. Due to the exceptionally high response rate, however, the non-response questions were not necessary to test non-response bias (only 6 visitor groups declined to participate

in the survey, none of which answered the non-response questions).

The final sample size (n=219) provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 6.6 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups (Figure 35).

In addition to sampling error, question wording and other biases can introduce error into surveys. To reduce answer option order bias, answers were randomized for non-ordinal answer choices.

### Data Analysis

Survey data was downloaded from the QuestionPro server and prepped for import into the statistical software SPSS using Microsoft Excel. SPSS was used for

Figure 35

### Margin of error for selected subgroups

Member segment	Sample size	Plus or minus... (percentage points)
All adult visitors	219	6.6
Tourism		
Local visitors	29	18.2
Tourist	190	7.1
Day visitors	33	17.1
Overnight visitors	157	7.8
Skill Level		
Beginner/Intermediate	112	9.3
Advanced/Expert	98	9.9

4 (1) What language do you speak most often at home? (2) Approximately how often do you visit this trail during spring, summer and fall? (3) What is your zip code (or country)? (4) What year were you born?



accuracy checks, recoding, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and statistical significance testing.

Throughout the report, unless otherwise specified, the word “average” refers to the sample’s median rather than mean. Means are provided where informative with an accompanying confidence interval. Confidence intervals are written as 95% C.I. [# , #], where the bracketed numbers refer to the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval for the reported mean.

Statistical hypothesis tests are included throughout the report to indicate statistically significant differences between visitor subgroups (e.g., locals and tourists, men and women, skill levels, etc.). Probability values (p-value) are included alongside these tests to indicate the probability the observed differences are due to actual underlying differences in the population rather than sampling error. Researchers typically use a probability threshold of 5% to indicate “statistical

significance” ( $p < 0.05$ ), meaning there is less than a 5% chance the difference would be observed if no actual differences existed between the two subgroups. This report largely adheres to the 5% standard, though occasionally includes differences with a higher probability of being due to random chance ( $p < 0.10$ ).

Responses to the open-ended question asking respondents if they had any additional comments were loosely grouped into categories and are provided in Appendix C.

### Weighting

Despite our best efforts to sample a representative set of visitors, weekend visitors were slightly overrepresented in our final dataset (Figure 35). To compensate for this sampling bias, the survey data was weighted by day of week (weekday vs. weekend) and time of day (morning visitors vs. afternoon/evening visitors). Weighting the data provides a more accurate reflection of all visitors, but must be done cautiously because it risks over-representing the

Figure 36

### Data weights

Visitor segment	Percentage of total traffic	Completed surveys	Percentage of survey sample	Weight
Weekday AM visits	23%	17	8%	2.90
Weekday PM visits	38%	93	42%	0.88
Weekend AM visits	16%	34	16%	1.04
Weekend PM visits	24%	75	34%	0.69

Note: Total traffic based on trail count conducted on the Shortstacker Trail at Britton Peak

views of several people who may not be an accurate reflection of their subgroup. For all analyses we created two sets of cross-tabulations: one set weighted and one set unweighted. Cross-tabs were compared side-by-side to verify the weighting didn't cause any extreme or unexplainable changes in the dataset.

### Challenges

The primary unanticipated challenge was the relatively low rate of survey collection. The original sampling plan, modeled largely on the *Handbook for Minnesota Parks and Trails Surveying*, anticipated collecting 4 to 5 completed surveys per hour in the field. Under that assumption, the original sample plan scheduled 80 hours of surveying, with flexibility to add 20 extra hours if necessary, in order to collect 400 completed surveys.

After the first few weeks of collecting surveys in the field, it became clear that collection rates of 4 to 5 surveys per hour was unattainable. At that point, several changes were made in the survey collection protocol in an attempt to increase responses without compromising data integrity. First, additional survey hours were scheduled and the survey sampling window was extended into the third week of September. Second, because several questions asked visitors about their experience (e.g., How long were you on the trail? How would you rate your experience?), the original survey protocol was to *only* survey visitors as they were

leaving the facility. This had the drawback of missing visitors who arrived later during the surveying shift and were still on the trail when the surveyor left. To compensate for this, the survey protocol was changed so that, during the final two hours of the surveying shift, surveyors started offering the survey to all visitors. If a visitor was just arriving, they were instructed to answer the “How long did you spend on the trail” and “How would you rate your overall experience on the trail” based on their most recent visit to the trail. If it was a first-time visitor, they were instructed to skip those two questions.

Despite those changes to increase completion rates, our final sample size (n=219) was well below our sampling quota (n=400). The primary drawback of a smaller size is increased uncertainty; Rather than a desired margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points, the margin of error for this study was plus or minus 6.6 percentage points. Small sample sizes also limit the ability to analyze differences between different groups of users. Consequently, there are likely additional group differences that were missed by this study. While any undetected differences are likely small (in numerical terms), they may be of practical significance. Readers should be aware visitor segments may differ in more ways than this study was able to conclude.

## Britton Peak Shortstacker Trail

### 2021 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

#### Counting Location:



#### Counting Period:

May 29, 2021 - Sept 6, 2021

**Summer ADT:** 59

**Weekdays:** 49

**Weekends:** 81

**Weekday Peak Hour:** 10:00am

**Weekend Peak Hour:** 11:00am

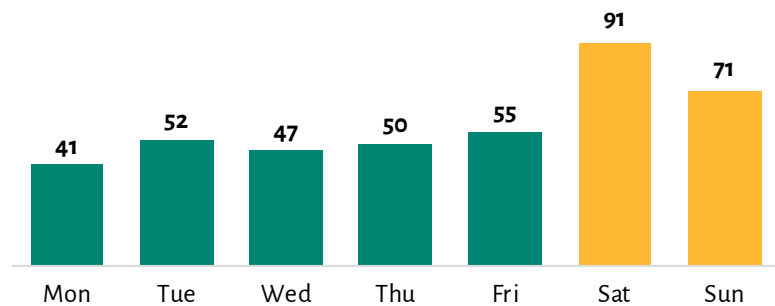
#### Estimated 2021 Summer Traffic

**5,937**

(Outbound traffic; one-way trail)

#### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

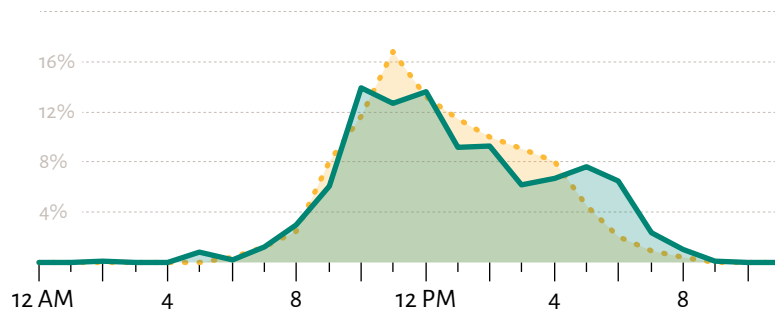
Average summer traffic



#### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

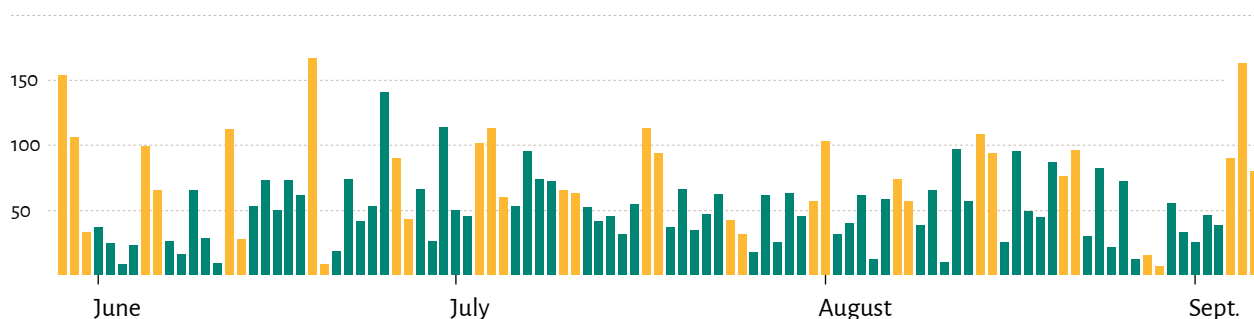
% of daily traffic

Weekday Weekend



#### 2021 Summer Total Daily Traffic

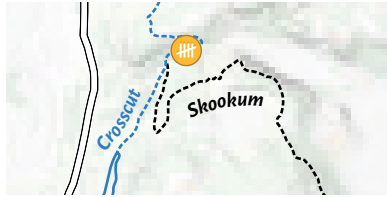
Weekdays (observed) Weekend / Holiday (observed)  
Weekdays (estimated) Weekend / Holiday (estimated)



## Britton Peak Jackpot Trail

### 2021 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

#### Counting Location:



#### Counting Period:

Aug 16, 2021 - Aug 29, 2021

**Summer ADT:** 30

**Weekdays:** 25

**Weekends:** 42

**Weekday Peak Hour:** 11:00am

**Weekend Peak Hour:** 2:00pm

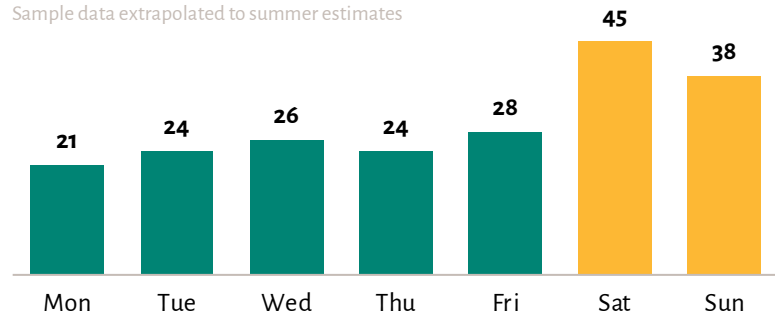
#### Estimated 2021 Summer Traffic



#### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

Average summer traffic

Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates

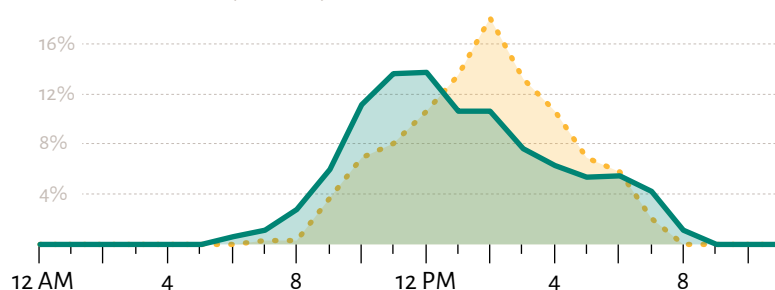


#### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

% of daily traffic

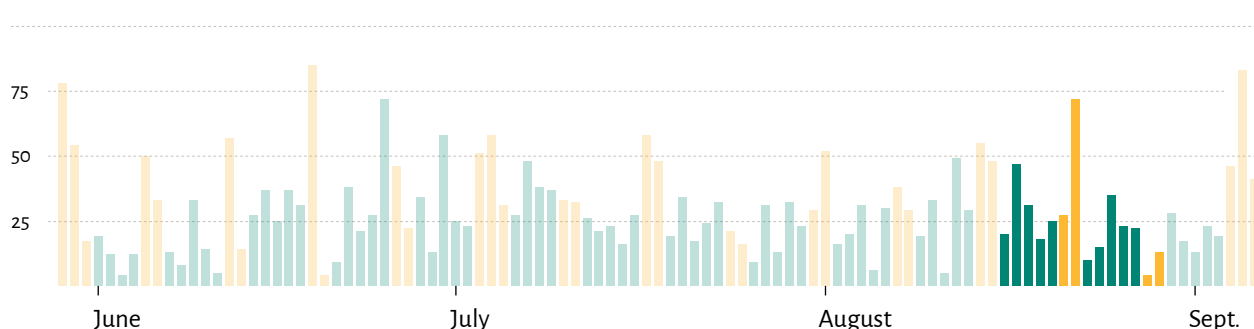
Weekday Weekend

Short-duration count data (smoothed)



#### Estimated and Observed 2021 Summer Total Daily Traffic

Weekdays (observed) Weekend / Holiday (observed)  
Weekdays (estimated) Weekend / Holiday (estimated)



# Lutsen Highclimber Trail

## 2021 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

### Counting Location:



### Counting Period:

Aug 16, 2021 – Aug 29, 2021

**Summer ADT:** 32

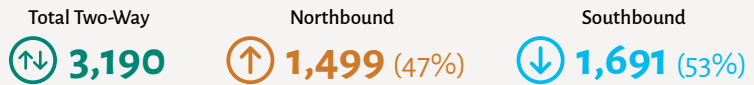
**Weekdays:** 26

**Weekends:** 44

**Weekday Peak Hour:** 10:00am

**Weekend Peak Hour:** 1:00pm

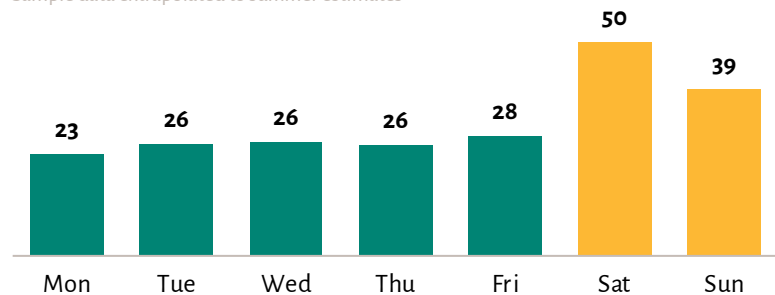
### Estimated 2021 Summer Traffic



### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

Average summer traffic

Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates

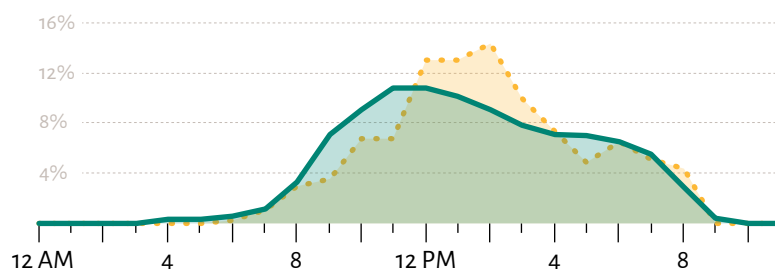


### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

% of daily traffic

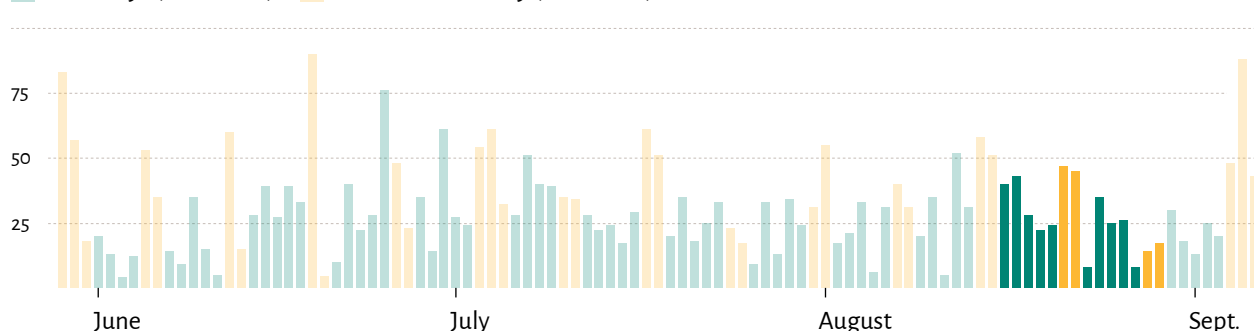
Weekday Weekend

Short-duration count data (smoothed)



### Estimated and Observed 2021 Summer Total Daily Traffic

Weekdays (observed) Weekend / Holiday (observed)  
Weekdays (estimated) Weekend / Holiday (estimated)

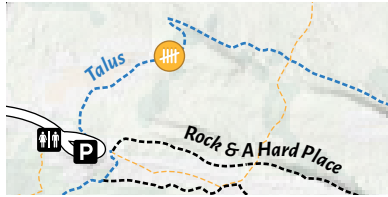




## Pincushion Talus Trail

### 2021 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

#### Counting Location:



#### Counting Period:

Jul 16, 2021 - Aug 14, 2021

**Summer ADT:** 16

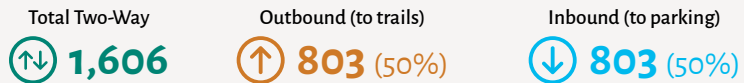
**Weekdays:** 14

**Weekends:** 20

**Weekday Peak Hour:** 12:00pm

**Weekend Peak Hour:** 11:00am

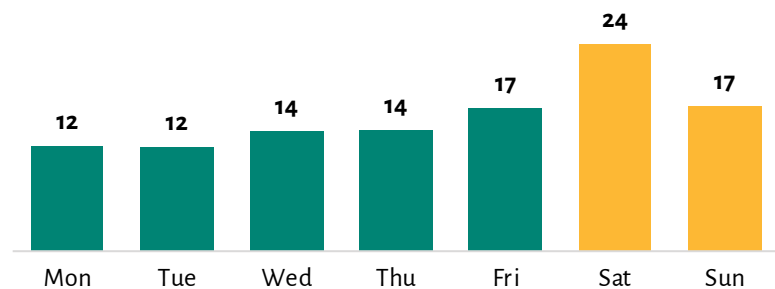
#### Estimated 2021 Summer Traffic



#### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

*Average summer traffic*

*Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates*

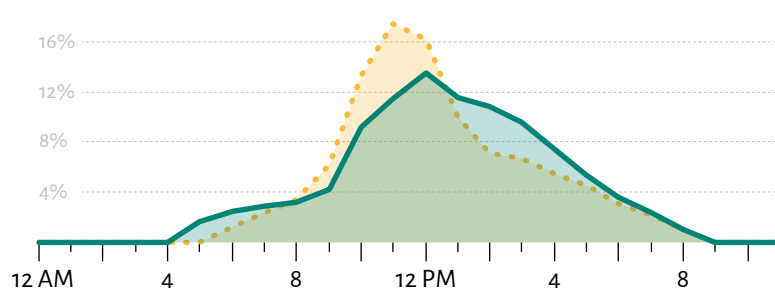


#### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

*% of daily traffic*

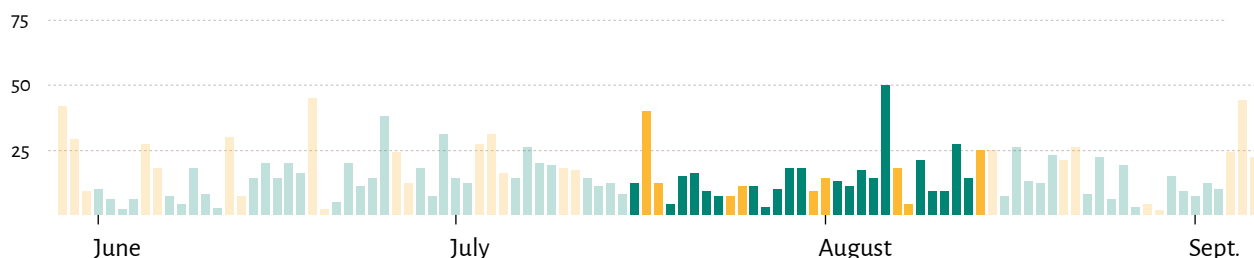
Weekday Weekend

*Short-duration count data (smoothed)*



#### Estimated and Observed 2021 Summer Total Daily Traffic

Weekdays (observed) Weekend / Holiday (observed)  
 Weekdays (estimated) Weekend / Holiday (estimated)



## Greater Minnesota Regional Trails Survey

### Survey Script:

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm working with Parks & Trails Council conducting a 6-minute trail survey to understand visitor experiences at [Britton Peak / Pincushion Mountain]. Are you using any of the singletrack trails at [Britton Peak / Pincushion Mountain] today?

- ☐ Yes [Continue]
- ☐ No [Discontinue; thank visitor and let them continue on their day]

Are you leaving the trail, or did you just arrive?

- ☐ Leaving the trail, or in the middle of their trail experience [Continue]
- ☐ Just arrived [Say thanks; Ask that they stop by later on in the day]

Are you willing to participate in the survey? All your answers are voluntary and confidential.

#### If **YES**:

Is anyone in your group 18 years old or older?

- ☐ Yes [Continue]
- ☐ No [Discontinue; log Non-Response]

Have you already taken this survey at this trail this summer, or were you with someone when they completed the survey at this trail this summer?

- ☐ Yes [Discontinue survey]
- ☐ No [Hand visitor the tablet and let them complete the questionnaire; If multiple adults in the group are willing to participate, only the adult in the group with nearest birthday should complete the survey]

#### If **NO**:

That's okay, no problem. Thanks for your time. Do you mind if I ask you just four quick questions before I let you go?

- ☐ Yes [Ask questions, log Non-Response Qs]

1. What language do you speak most often at home?
2. Approximately how often do you visit this trail during spring, summer and fall?
3. What is your zip code (or country)?
4. What year were you born?

- ☐ No [Discontinue; log Non-Response]

### Trail Experience

**1. Which trail activities are you and your group doing during your visit today?**

[RANDOMIZE]

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Mountain biking
- ☐ Hiking or walking
- ☐ Dog walking
- ☐ Running or jogging
- ☐ Horseback riding
- ☐ Geocaching
- ☐ Nature photography
- ☐ Birdwatching / wildlife viewing
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**2. [IF MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES SELECTED] Which one of these activities was your main reason for visiting this trail?** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. [IF Q1 = MOUNTAIN BIKING] Do you have a favorite place in Minnesota to go mountain biking?**

- ☐ Yes. Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No

**4. [IF Q1 = MOUNTAIN BIKING] What is your mountain biking skill level?**

- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

**5. [IF Q1 = MOUNTAIN BIKING] Are you riding a fat-tire bike today?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**6. [IF Q1 = MOUNTAIN BIKING] Are you riding your own bike today?**

- ☐ Yes, I'm using my own bike
- ☐ No, I'm using a rental bike
- ☐ No, I'm borrowing a bike from a friend or family member

**7. What are your most important reasons for visiting the trail today? [RANDOMIZE]**

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Experience nature
- ☐ Improve my physical health
- ☐ Relaxation and/or stress relief
- ☐ Spend time with family or friends
- ☐ Meet new people
- ☐ Training for event/competition
- ☐ Do something exciting and adventurous
- ☐ Learn/practice tricks and skills
- ☐ Getting my children outdoors
- ☐ Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Approximately how much time did you spend at the trail on this visit?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ hours  
 \_\_\_\_\_ minutes  
☐ Unsure

**9. Approximately how often do you visit this trail during spring, summer and fall?**

- ☐ This is my first time visiting  
☐ Daily  
☐ Weekly  
☐ Monthly  
☐ Once a year  
☐ Less than once a year  
☐ Unsure

**10. Overall, how would you rate your trail experience today?**

- ☐ Very good  
☐ Good  
☐ Fair  
☐ Poor  
☐ Very poor

**11. How many people are in the group you're recreating with today?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Adults (18 years and older, including yourself)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Children (under 18 years)

**Information / Planning**

**12. What information sources have you used to learn about this trail? [RANDOMIZE]**

*(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ I've known about this trail for years  
☐ Friends and family  
☐ From a club / group ride  
☐ Recommendation from a business, visitor center, etc.  
☐ "Minnesota Great Outdoors" online park and trail finder  
☐ Internet search (e.g., Google)  
☐ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)  
☐ Official website [[VISIT COOK COUNTY, SUPERIOR CYCLING ASSOCIATION](#)]  
☐ Trail app/website:  
     ☐ MTB Project  
     ☐ Singletracks  
     ☐ MapMyRide  
     ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Trail Forks  
☐ Strava  
☐ All Trails  
☐ Print publication (brochure, magazine, or newspaper)  
☐ TV or radio  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. To prepare for your visit today, did you or your group look for information about this trail before you came?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. [IF Q13 = YES] What information did you search for before your visit today?

[RANDOMIZE]

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Travel directions
- ☐ Trail rules / Allowed trail activities
- ☐ Trail maps and miles
- ☐ Trail difficulty
- ☐ Trail reviews / photos
- ☐ Cost/Fees
- ☐ Equipment rentals
- ☐ Parking information
- ☐ Park/trail hours
- ☐ Nearby lodging options
- ☐ Nearby restaurants
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tourism / Trip Info**

**15. Do you live more than 50 miles from this trail?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**16. Are you on a trip where you have or plan to stay at least one night away from home?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**17. [IF Q15 AND/OR Q16 = YES] How important was the trail in deciding to visit this area?**

- ☐ The trail was the primary reason why I visited the area  
☐ The trail was a significant reason why I visited the area  
☐ The trail was part of the reason why I visited the area  
☐ I would have visited this area even without the trail  
☐ Don't know

**18. [IF Q16 = YES] How many total nights do you plan to spend in this area during your trip? \_\_\_\_\_**

**19. [IF Q16 = YES] What type of overnight accommodations are you staying in during your trip? [RANDOMIZE]**

*Select all that apply*

- ☐ Hotel / motel  
☐ Resort / lodge / commercial cabin  
☐ Vacation rental by owner (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.)  
☐ Bed & Breakfast  
☐ Campground  
☐ Home/cabin of friend or relative  
☐ My own vacation home  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**20. [IF Q15 AND/OR Q16 = YES] How far in advance did you plan this trip?**

- ☐ Less than 1 week  
☐ 1 to 2 weeks  
☐ 1 month  
☐ 1 - 2 months  
☐ 2 - 3 months  
☐ 3+ months

**Demographics**

**21. What is the zip code of your home address, or what is your country of residence?**

a. Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ or b. Country: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_**



**23. What is your gender identity?**

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**24. Do you identify as transgender?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**25. How do you describe yourself?**

*(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Native American, First Nation or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Some other race, ethnicity or origin

**26. [IF Q25 = NATIVE AMERICAN] Which tribe do you affiliate with?**

*(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- ☐ Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- ☐ Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- ☐ Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- ☐ Lower Sioux Indian Community
- ☐ Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- ☐ Prairie Island Indian Community
- ☐ Red Lake Nation
- ☐ Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- ☐ Upper Sioux Community
- ☐ White Earth Nation
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**27. What language do you speak most often at home?**

- ☐ English
- ☐ Hmong
- ☐ Somali
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**28. [IF Q27 ≠ ENGLISH] How well do you speak English?**

- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Well
- ☐ Not well
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**29. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school graduate or GED
- ☐ Some college, but no degree
- ☐ Associate, vocational, or technical degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

**30. Do you, or does someone in your group, have a physical, mental or sensory disability or condition?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**31. Please indicate your total household income before taxes last year**

- ☐ Less than \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$89,999
- ☐ \$90,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 - \$199,999
- ☐ \$200,000 or more
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

**32. Do you have any additional comments about your visit you'd like to share?**

**Thank you!**

## Appendix C: Responses to open-ended “Additional Comments” (Q32)

### Positive comments about the trails:

2nd favorite place in the state

Absolutely incredible trails--easily the best I've ever ridden in MN, and the most beautiful I've ridden ANYWHERE.

I mostly ride road, and these have me wanting to buy a new FS mtb.

Amazing trails

Awesome ride

Awesome trail (5)

Best point to point trail in the state.

Britton is our second favorite place to ride with the different skill levels

Enjoyed immensely

Fun

Great trails! (9)

Great trails, would recommend for anyone in the area.

Love it (2)

Love these trails

Loved it came back to ride it again

New trail work is awesome! I'll be back.

Probably the best designed, balanced and fun mountain bike trail system i have visited anywhere in the world.

Radical, keep up the good work!

REALLY FUN TRAIL THANKS!

Thank you builders and volunteers

Thank you for the trails!

Thanks for building it!

Thanks for this trail!!

These trails are a treasure!

This is a fantastic Mountain bike trail.

Great work!

This is the best trail ever

This trail is fantastic!

This trail was so well maintained! Loved it!

Trails in amazing condition. Perfect day to visit.

Trails were great

Tremendous trail system for hiking and biking

We had so much fun on this trail! It is a must ride!

We love this place

### Comments about Jackpot Trail:

Jackpot is a gem

Jackpot is a terrific trail! Great work by trail crew and all agencies involved in the creation of the trail.

Jackpot trails are great!

Jackpot rocks

Love Jackpot!!

### Comments about trail difficulty:

Easiest trail was too difficult for me. Not for beginners.

Love the trail would like more green loops

More jump features and steep downhill

**Comments about expanding the system:**

Build more trails!

Expand

Keep building great trails,!

More mtb trails!

More trail diversity. I felt like I was riding the same section of trail for 40 miles. The trail needs more character. Otherwise nicely done.

More trails please

Needs a return trail to make it a loop!

Needs more parking space. Thats my only recommendation. This is my favorite trail in MN

Please build more mountain bike trails!

Also parking and restrooms!

Very smooth, would love more wooden features and rock rolls.

Water fill station would be great! We love the new SHT trail. Always love Pincushion Mt. Overlook.

**Comments about trail signage:**

Better signage would help.

Get better signs of bike path

Great signs and map - didn't get lost like last time. Nice wood bridges too.

I'm glad there are toilets here. Wold be nice if the bike start sign were more obvious.

Map at trailhead could be clearer. Wrong 'u r here' is noted. Direction of trails missing.

Mile markings would be nice

More signage would be nice

Signage could be better by crosscut junction

The signage was great.

Thx 4 the great trails, just could use a few sign replacement/repairs, no biggie, just a few were.

Trails are epic. Good tech, good flow, nice wood work and obstacles. Trail signage could definitely be improved for clarity of direction and trail usage. More wide-spread trails throughout the forest would be amazing and could significantly boost summer and fall recreation in the area, benefiting local business and rental owners. It would

**Miscellaneous comments:**

Value communities that provide these resources and maintain and keep updates currents

We plan to retire up north some day

For more information:



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