

Memo



Date: March 16, 2010
File: 6130-00
To: City Manager
From: Ian Wilson, Park Services Manager
Subject: Knox Mountain Drive Vehicle Access

Recommendation:

THAT on a trial basis during the months of May, June and July 2010, staff change the opening times for public vehicle use of Knox Mountain Drive from the current schedule (6 AM to 10 PM), to an alternative schedule (9 AM to 9 PM), except during special events;

AND THAT Council direct staff to close the road to vehicles for one Sunday (date to be determined) during the 2010 season, on a trial basis, in order to allow increased access for walkers and cyclists on Knox Mountain Drive and gauge public support for more Sunday closures to vehicles;

AND THAT staff report back to Council with the results of these trials.

Background:

Knox Mountain Park is open to the public year-round although the paved road (Knox Mountain Drive) is normally closed to public vehicle access during the months of December through March, depending on weather.

When the road is closed and particularly in early spring, it has been observed that the road surface can be very popular with walkers, cyclists, roller-bladers, parents with strollers, etc. who take advantage of the vehicle-free status before the road is re-opened. The city has received public feedback in the past from some users who have asked for the road closures to be extended beyond the winter season.

In 2009 staff conducted several surveys of park user groups as well as the general public to gauge support for periodic closures of the road. Vehicle counters were also installed several times over the season to monitor the actual road usage by cars as well as larger vehicles.

A Knox Mountain master plan update is currently underway through the Infrastructure Planning department. As part of the planning process, an initial public survey at a May 14th open house found that 77% of respondents were "in favour of daily closures of the road above the first lookout". A much larger survey was then offered on-line and through paper copies available at the park, from July 10 - September 16, 2009. This survey received a high number of responses (707 total), including approximately 21 responses from tourists / out of town visitors. The results of this larger survey (attached) indicated that a smaller majority of respondents (55%) were in favour of daily closures above the first lookout, while 52% were in favour of "closing the entire road during certain times of day". The majority of those surveyed (60%) were not in favour of widening the road to accommodate extra pedestrian or bike traffic.

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The most common comments by those who were not in favour of road closures indicated concerns about park accessibility for less-able users (44% of comments), followed by convenience (14%), a feeling that it is not necessary / no perceived conflict between vehicles and other users (13%), and potential impacts on tourism (8%).

In addition to the survey data, automated vehicle counters were set up across the road in two locations to sample actual vehicle numbers during three periods: June 5-11; July 1-9; and August 18-24, 2009. The two counters were located across the road just below, and just above the first lookout, respectively. The data provided a good snapshot of road usage trends, although the lower cable was inoperable from July 1-5, and some cyclists and service vehicles were also captured by the vehicle counters. Following is a summary of results:

Summary of car traffic data:

- On average, about 70% of all cars traveled beyond the first lookout;
- Approximately 95% of all vehicle traffic occurred between 9 AM and 9 PM (Fig. 1);
- The highest daily number of cars occurred on July 2, 2009 (up to 470 cars at first lookout);
- Saturdays were normally the busiest day of the week;
- Sundays had the lowest car traffic, on average;
- On average, about 290 vehicles drove to the first lookout during the sampling period;
- Average speed (29 km/hr) was very close to the posted 30 km/hr limit, although the traffic counters were located in an area where traffic speeds tend to be low;

Summary of bus / truck traffic data:

- Buses / trucks were differentiated from cars based upon distance between axles. It was assumed that most were buses but we are unable to say for sure.
- Some errors in the data had to be removed (e.g. vehicles with >3 axles); presumably these were groups of cyclists;
- On average about 2 buses/trucks go to first lookout per day. Most days it is actually 0 or 1 but there were 7 large vehicles on July 4th which skewed the average (Fig. 2).
- Bus/truck traffic in early morning or late evening is also very low.

Conclusions:

- Although there was a high preference for road closures at the open house, only a slight majority favoured periodic road closures in the larger survey.
- Among those who favoured closures, most preferred to close the entire road rather than just a closure above the first lookout.
- Sampling of vehicle numbers found that 95% of all vehicle traffic occurred between 9 AM and 9 PM.
- Staff and the Knox Mountain caretaker have observed that most late evening traffic tends to be related to undesirable activities.
- The installation of speed bumps has reduced speeding in the park.

Therefore, staff recommend a trial period where the road is open between 9am and 9pm only. . This would allow cyclists and hikers some times to enjoy the paved road during hours when the temperatures are cooler, with minimal impacts on vehicle traffic. Vehicle users would still have full access for 12 hours per day, and this should also help to avoid some undesirable traffic in late evenings.

Recreation and Cultural Services staff have also indicated an interest in programming walking or other recreational activities on the road surface during the closure periods. There may also be an opportunity to promote walkability and additional vehicle-free events with other city departments. Thus staff are recommending a trial road closure for an entire Sunday (date to be determined) during the 2010 season.

Park Services staff will report back to City Council before January 2011 on the results of these trials and with additional recommendations for future access.

External Agency/Public Comments:

See attached summary of the public survey that was available on-line and in paper format from July 10 - September 16, 2009. The Friends of Knox Mountain have indicated a general support for road closures. Also attached is a letter from Tourism Kelowna.

Communications Considerations:

Staff will work with the Community and Media Relations department to provide signage and some advertising regarding the change in hours.

Internal Circulation:

Carla Stephens, Director, Community and Media Relations
Jerry Dombowsky, Transportation Demand Supervisor

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:
Legal/statutory Procedural Requirements:
Existing Policy:
Financial/Budgetary Considerations:
Personnel Implications:
Technical Requirements:
Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by:



I. Wilson, Park Services Manager

Approved for inclusion:



Joe Creron, Director, Civic Operations

CC: J. Vos, General Manager Community Services
L. Roberts-Taylor, Manager Community & Neighbourhood Programs
T. Barton, Parks Planning Manager

Fig. 1. Average vehicle traffic according to time of day during the sampling period, both below and above the first lookout. Approximately 95% of traffic falls between 09:00 and 21:00 hours.

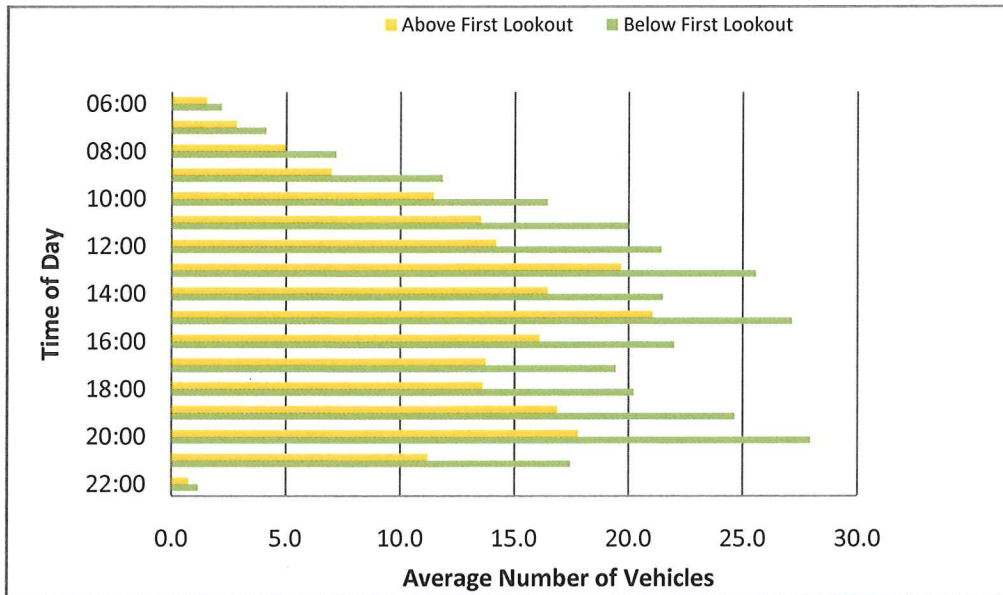
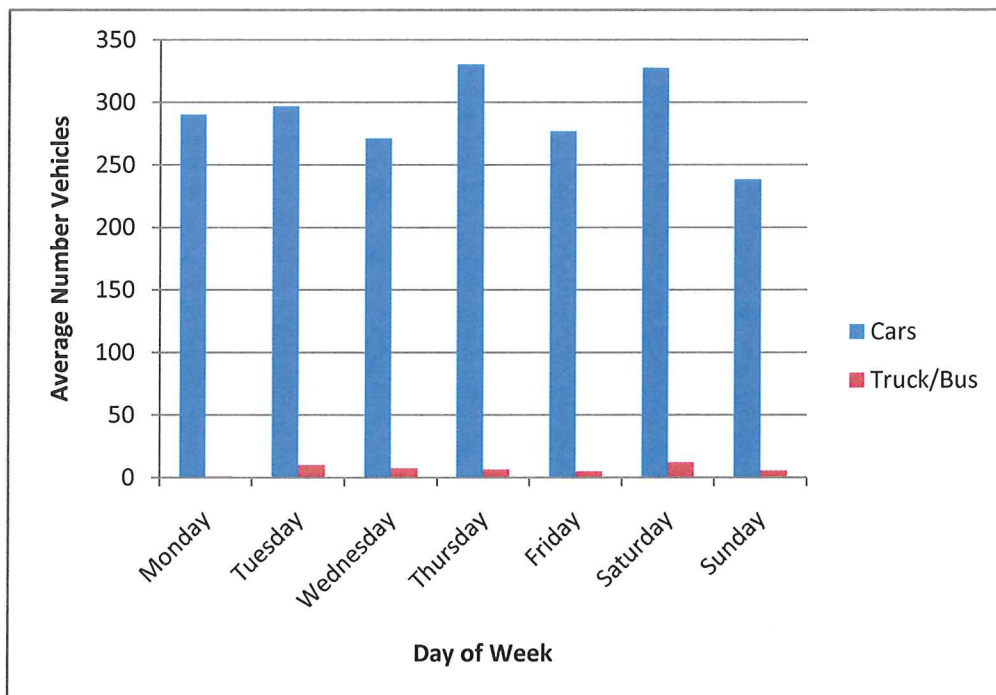
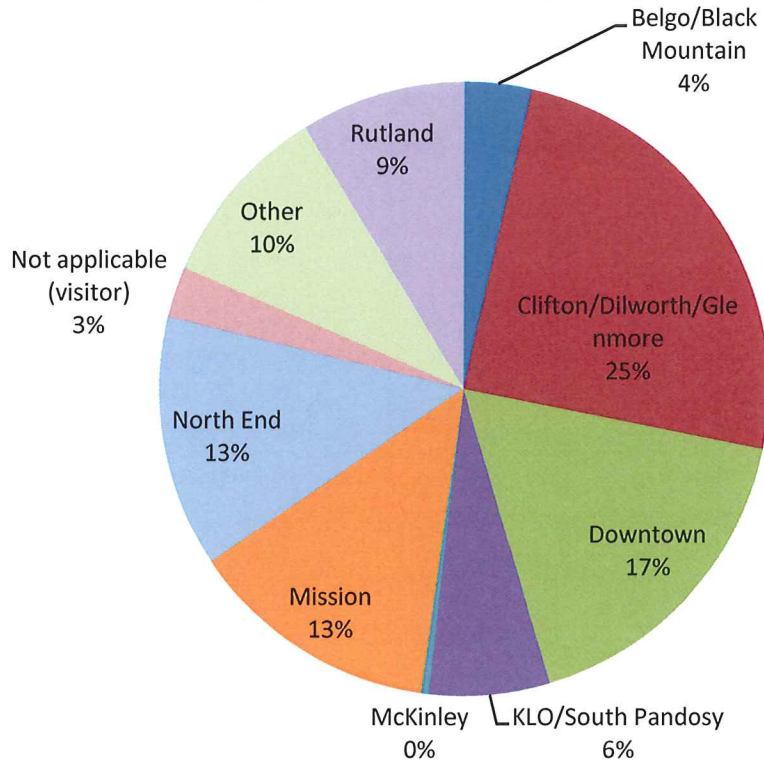


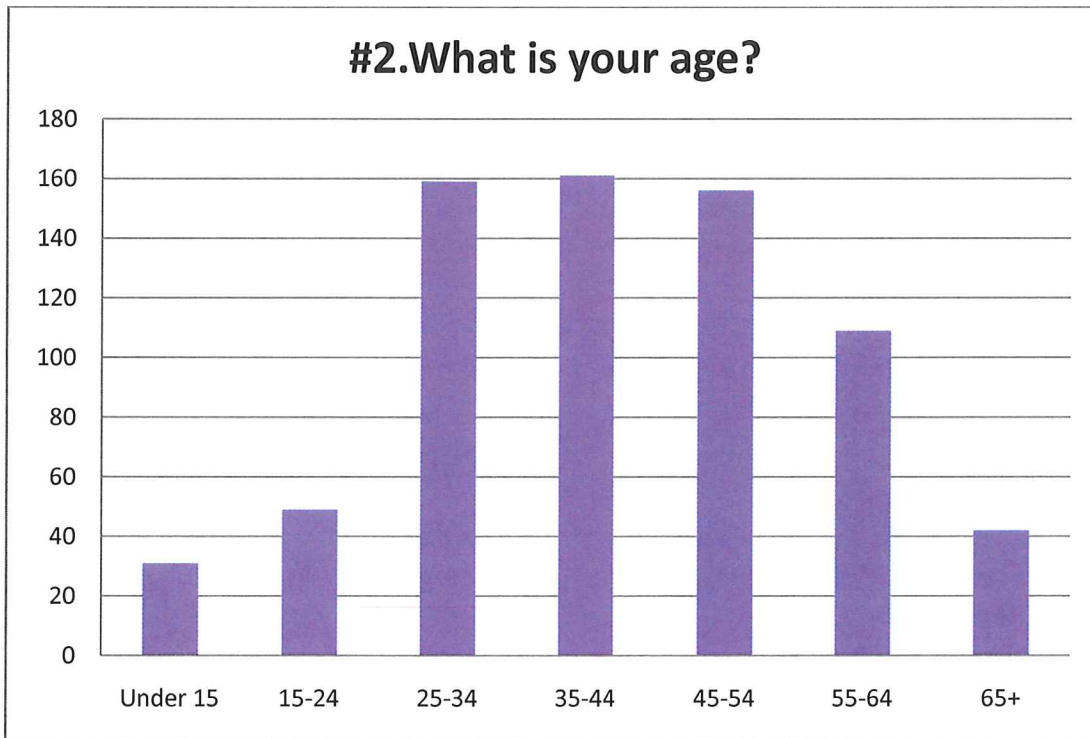
Fig. 2. Average number of vehicles driving to the first lookout during the sampling period, by day of the week.



#1. What part of the city do you live in?

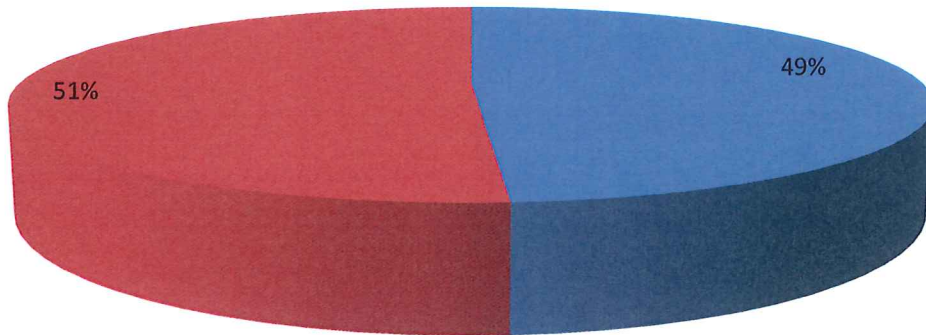


#2. What is your age?

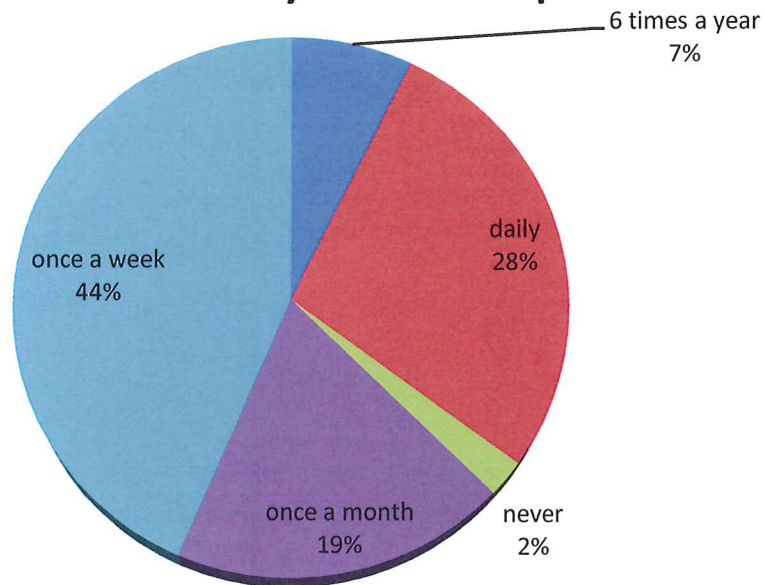


#3. What is your gender?

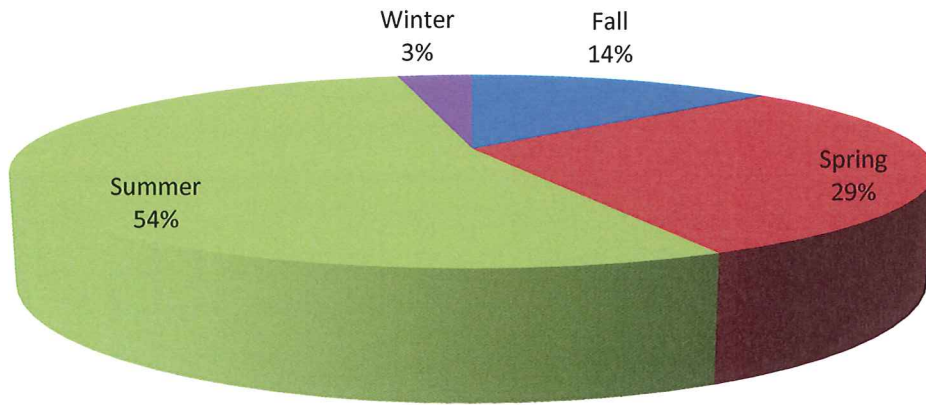
■ male ■ female



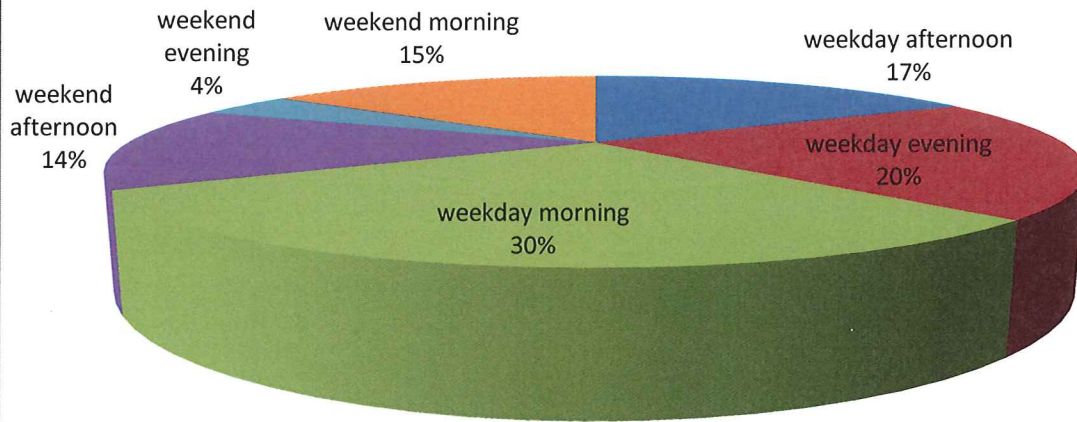
#4. How often do you visit the park?



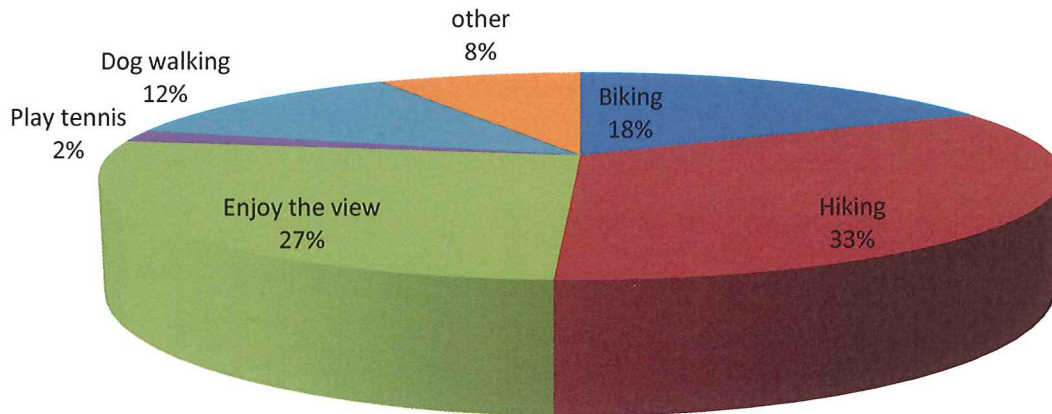
#5. What time of year do you most often visit the park?



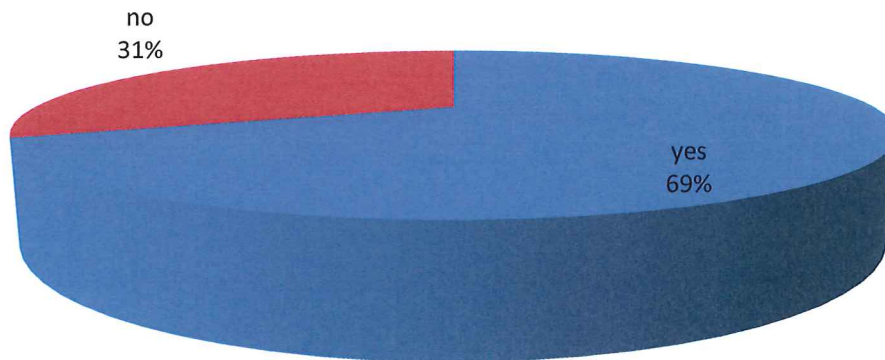
#6. What time of day do you most often visit the park?



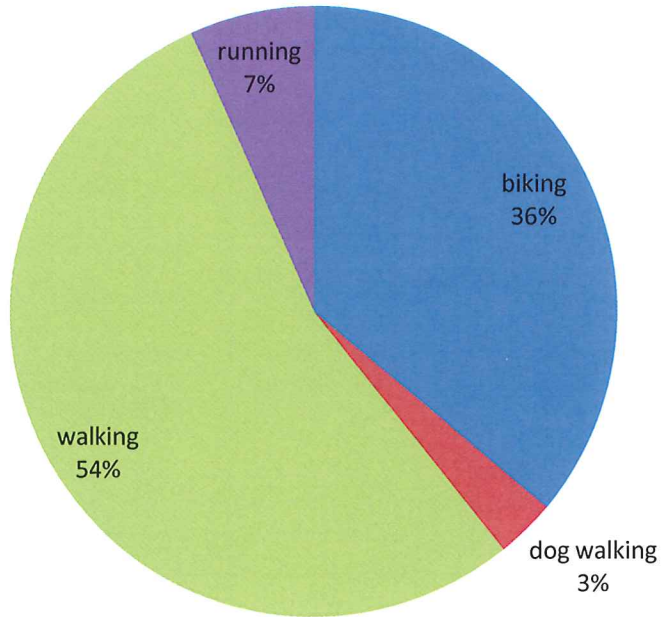
#7.What do you do there?



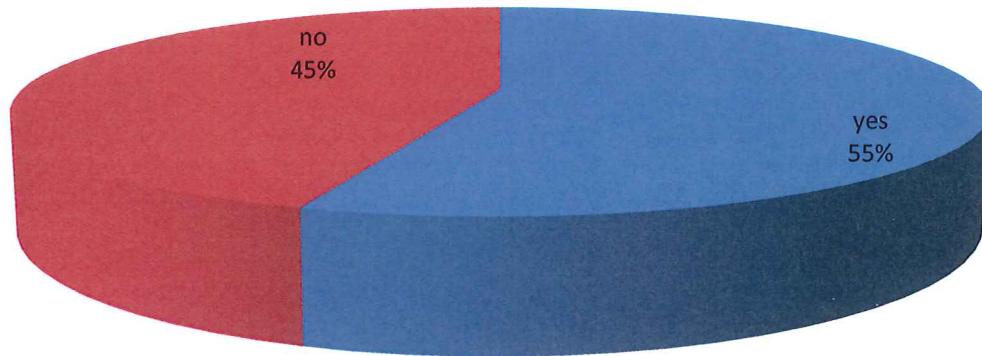
#8.Do you walk, jog, bike or roller-blade (etc) on the paved surface of Knox Mountain Drive?



If yes, what is your primary activity?



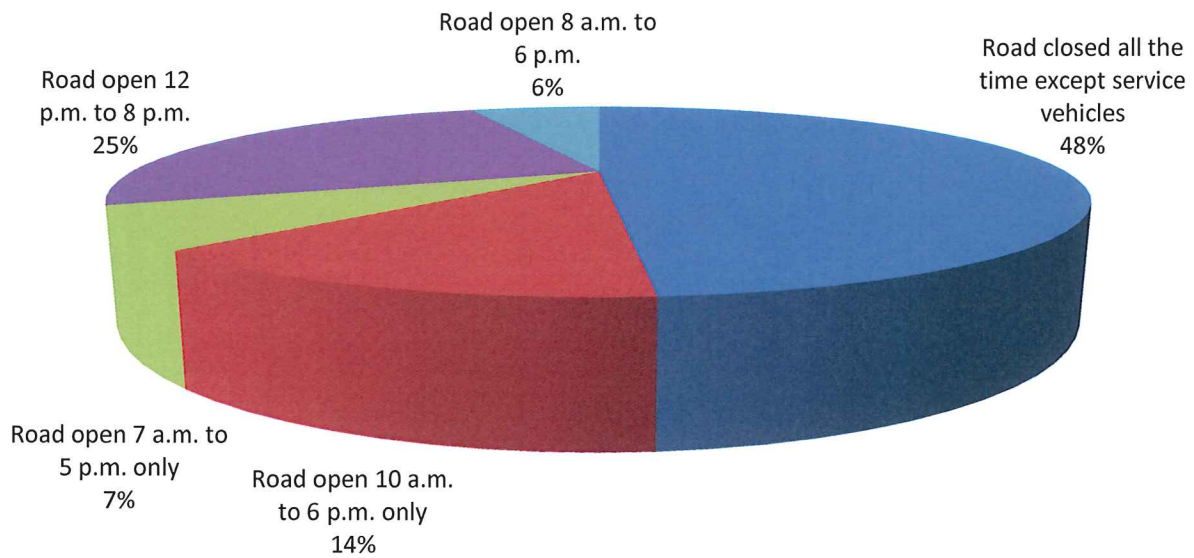
#9. Are you in favour of daily closures to road vehicular traffic above the first look out?



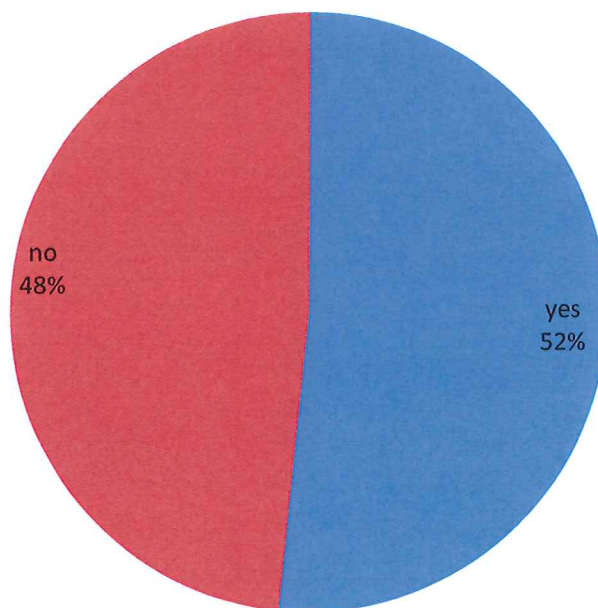
#10. If you answered “No”, why not? Comment Summary

Comment Type	Number of comments	% of Total Comments
Park should be fully accessible to all, some users may not be able to access the top of the park, or see views if road closed	95	44%
Like to have the option to drive to top (e.g. for views); more convenient, should be open	30	14%
Not necessary; don't see any conflict between cars and people	28	13%
May negatively impact tourism	18	8%
Prefer to widen the paved portion of road to improve access; build separate bike or walking path	7	3%
Pedestrians already have hiking trails for their use, leave the road open to vehicles	5	2%
Having more people drive to top keeps “more eyes on the park” and improves safety, less vandalism etc	5	2%
Need to be able to use vehicles to shuttle bicycles up	4	2%
Other	22	10%

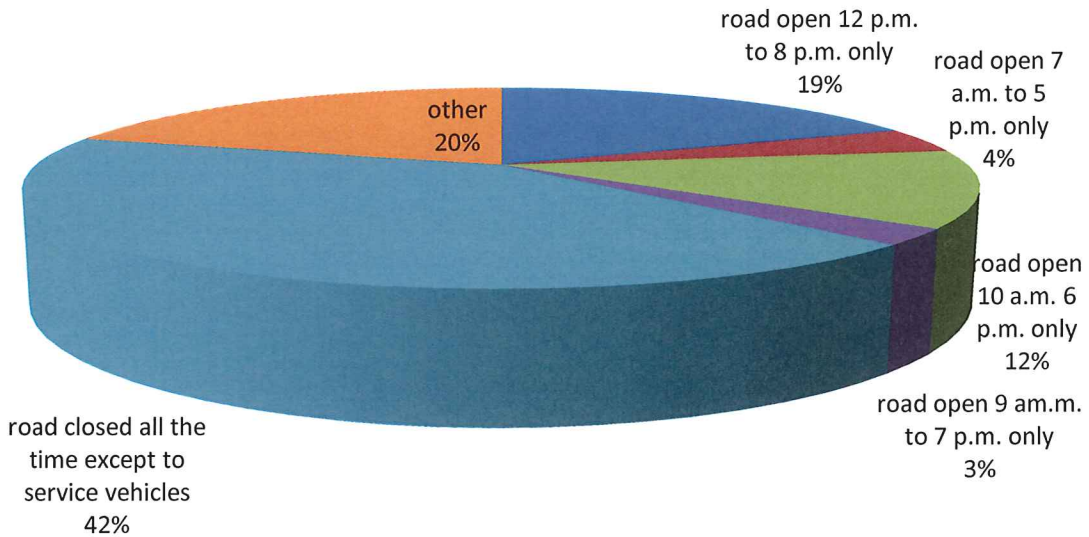
#11. If yes, indicate the following choice (s) you prefer for the closure of the upper road:



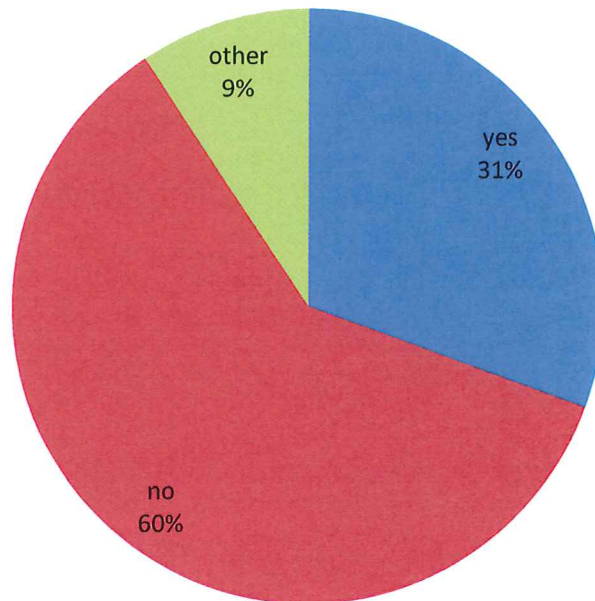
#12 Would you be in favour of closing the entire road during certain times of the day?



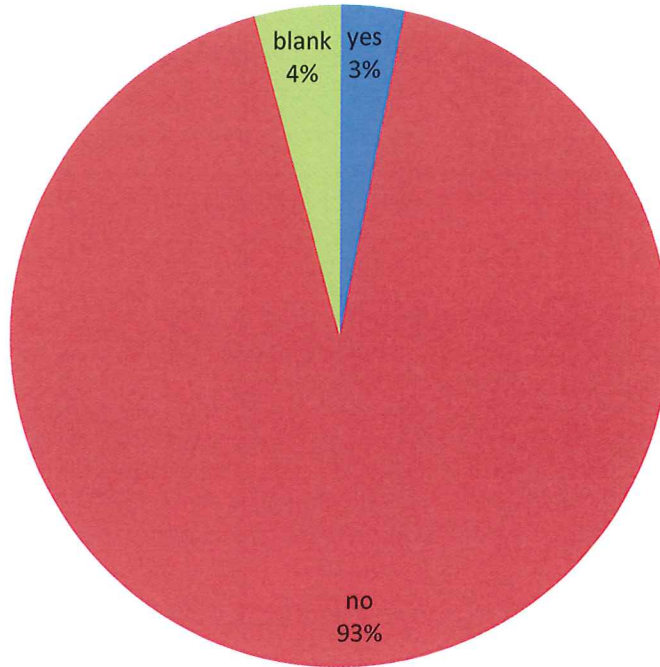
#13 If yes, indicate which of the following choice(s) you prefer for the closure of the entire road



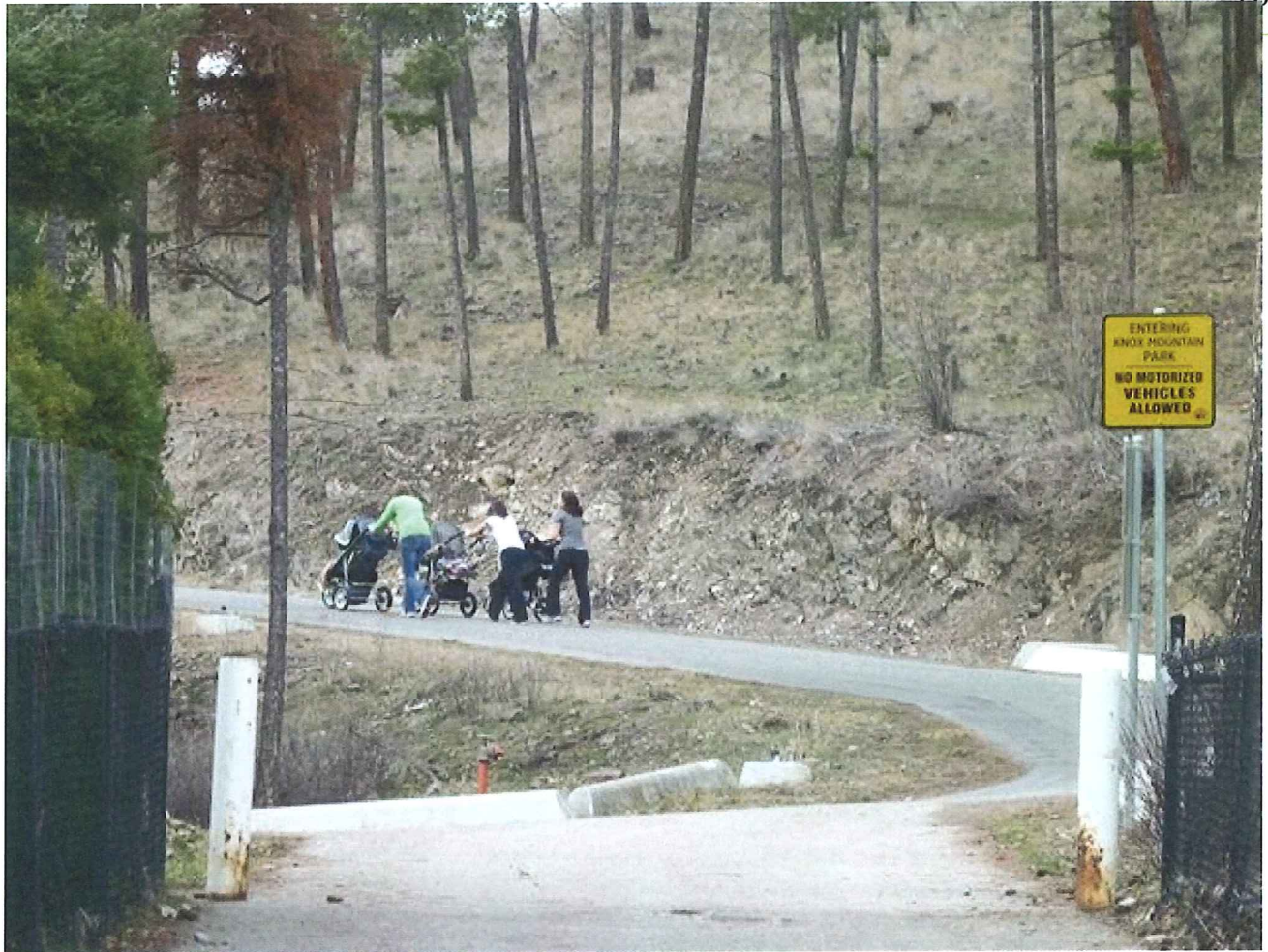
#14. Widen Knox Mountain road instead?



#15 Have you recently filled out a similar survey?



Recent Winter Usage of the Park:



(Photo by M. Goddard, March 2010)



(Photo by Claudia Buhler, March 2, 2010)



(Photo by M. Goddard, March 2010)



(Photo by M. Goddard, March 2010)

Knox Mountain Survey Results (July – September 2009)



(Photo by M. Goddard, March 2010)

Sherry Scovil

From: Nancy Cameron [nancy@tourismkelowna.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 23, 2010 9:39 AM
To: Joe Creron
Cc: Sherry Scovil; Ian Wilson
Subject: Knox Mountain Road Closure Proposal

Hello Joe,

Here's our comments regarding the proposed road closure for Knox Mountain:

Tourism Kelowna cannot support any closure of the Knox Mountain road. The lookouts and trails at the top of this road are promoted by Kelowna's tourism businesses as some of Kelowna's best views and hiking experiences. Visitors frequent the top lookout where they feel the full impact of our beautiful destination. They do not expect access closures or restrictions to public spaces and if experienced not only would it provide a negative impression of Kelowna in their minds, but it would compromise a significant opportunity to turn our visitors into raving fans and promoters of our destination.

Best,
Nancy



Nancy Cameron
CEO
P: 250.861.1515 ext. 202
E: nancy@tourismkelowna.com
www.tourismkelowna.com

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