



Manitoba
Trails Strategy
What We Heard

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Project Overview

Manitoba is preparing a Provincial Trails Strategy to guide the development and maintenance of a provincial trail network for recreational activities such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling and off-road vehicle riding. For the purposes of the Trails Strategy, trails include motorized and non-motorized trails, as well as water routes, in both backcountry and frontcountry areas. Input from stakeholders, the public and other interested parties has been considered as part of the process of preparing a Manitoba Trails Strategy.

Engagement Overview

Manitoba has engaged with and invited comment from many different stakeholder groups, organizations, community representatives and the public as part of the engagement process for the Manitoba Trails Strategy. Input received to date has been used to help prepare the Strategy, and these engagement efforts will continue as part of the process to implement the Strategy.

The feedback reported on in this report was primarily obtained via public engagement on the EngageMB website, including a public survey and a page where people could share ideas on how to improve Manitoba's network of trails. In addition, input was received through a survey for trail groups and builders, and a small number of comments submitted via email. A public webinar about the Trails Strategy was also held on January 13, 2021, with over 150 viewers.

The first survey, available on the EngageMB website between August 21 – September 21, 2020, was targeted at trail groups, clubs, planners and builders. An extensive list of stakeholders and representatives of other organizations or communities was invited via email to complete the survey, and 80 responses were received. The majority of respondents were representatives of groups focused on a particular trail or area, activity-based groups, or a trail designer/planner/builder. Of these respondents, there was a mixed level of interest in motorized, non-motorized and multi-use trails. Key findings from this survey are described below.

The second survey was available to the public on the EngageMB website between December 7, 2020 – January 22, 2021. The survey was primarily promoted via email and through social media, and 2022 responses were received. A total of 63 ideas were submitted to the ideas page, and many of those were commented on by other participants. The survey responses and ideas are summarized below, with a full report on the survey data available in Appendix A.

What We Heard

The 2022 respondents to the public survey were of mixed ages ranging from 18 to 65+, with 57 per cent living in Winnipeg and the rest spread across other areas of Manitoba.

The vast majority of respondents (96 per cent) indicated that they have used trails in the past two years, and 49 per cent consider themselves to be moderately familiar with existing recreational trails in Manitoba. Respondents have used trails across Manitoba, with Eastern Manitoba being the most frequently used area and Northern Manitoba the least. There is also a mixed frequency of trail use across different seasons; weekly use was the most commonly selected option in all seasons but 20 per cent of respondents indicated they use trails daily in the summer. Notably, 49 per cent indicated that their frequency of trail use has increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

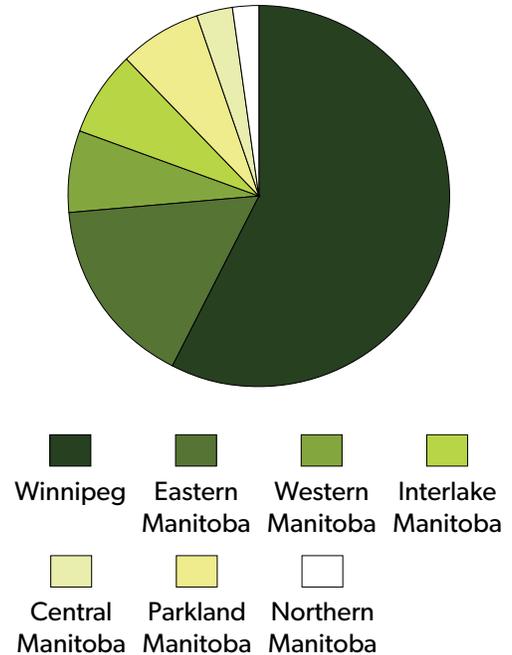
Over 84 per cent of respondents indicated that they take part in walking and/or hiking. The next-most selected activities were paddling (51 per cent), cross-country skiing (46 per cent), and cycling (43 per cent). Activities that 20 per cent or more of respondents would like to try but have not include: fat biking, dog sledding, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and paddling.

The public survey posed questions on a number of topics related to recreational trail use, and participants submitted comments on a wide variety of subjects. Overall, the most frequently commented on topics were:

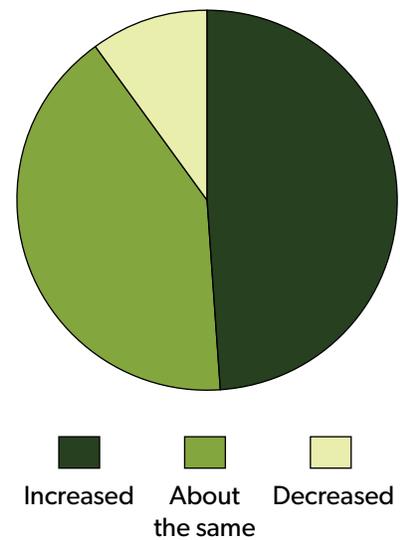
- Trail fees and funding: While there is some support for new or different types of trail fees, respondents are generally not in favour of fees for trails apart from existing park and off-road vehicle (ORV) pass systems.
- Issues regarding trail use conflicts, overcrowding on trails, and a lack of etiquette resulting in things such as garbage being left behind by trail users.
- The need for improved signage, more frequent or better trail maintenance, and greater access to and quality of information about existing trails.

The ideas posted on the EngageMB ideas page were consistent with the survey results. The themes with the highest volume of ideas or comments included the need for increased amenities or maintenance on trails, a desire for more trails or extensions to existing trails, the need for improved signage, the need for increased public education, and a desire for more backcountry camping or route options.

In which region of Manitoba do you live?



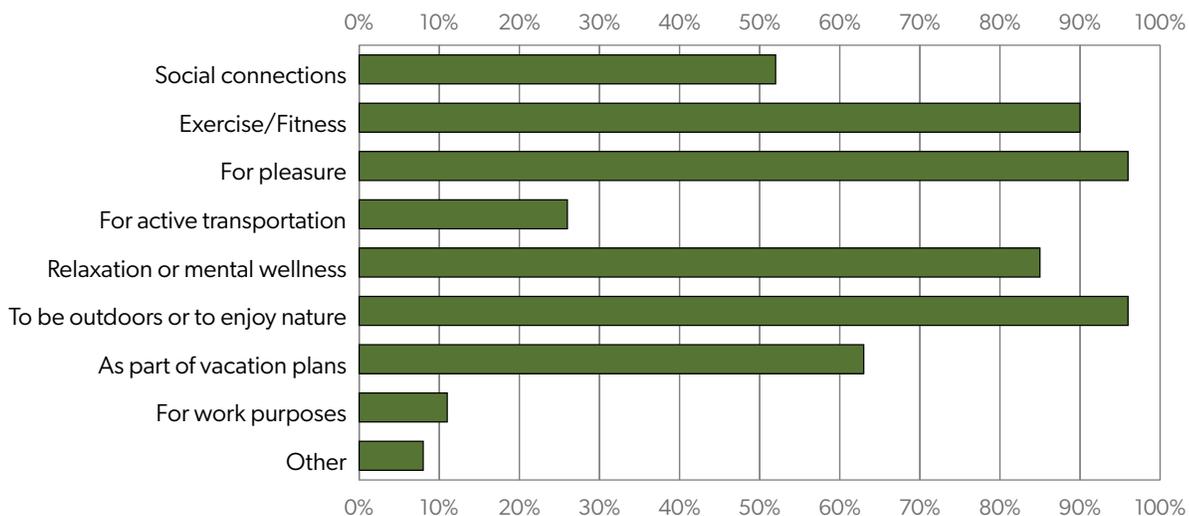
Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, has your frequency of trail use in Manitoba increased, decreased, or remained about the same?



Manitoba's Trail Network: Current State, Development and Maintenance

The public survey asked several questions related to Manitobans' use of recreational trails, including where and how often they use trails, why they use trails, what types of trails or activities they are interested in, and what is important to them in terms of trail features and amenities. In general, respondents to the survey submitted many positive comments about their love for Manitoba trails across the province, or for particular trails. People are glad to see the Trails Strategy development is underway and happy to be able to share their comments. Many comments were also provided about the importance of trails for physical and mental health, quality of life, community connections and the economic benefits of trails, including current and potential tourism-related benefits. Participants indicated they use trails for a number of reasons.

Why do you use trails in Manitoba?



There were numerous comments related to requests for more trails for particular activities, changes to existing trail designations, connectivity of trails across the province, and the trail development application or permitting process. People also submitted a variety of specific comments about particular trails, both positive and negative, including trails that people love to use, and trails that need maintenance or improved signage. These comments about specific trails or areas have been recorded but there were too many to list them in this report. Other responses related to Manitoba's trail network included:

- Comments in favour of more multi-use trail designations and more sharing of trails, as well as requests for more single-use trail designations, such as more trails for horseback riding, mountain biking or fat biking, snowshoeing, winter hiking, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding, more dog-friendly trails, etc.
- The potential northern Manitoba has for more trail development, promotion and overall use.
- A desire for improvements to existing trails as well as new trail development.
- The issue of roads and highways being barriers to creating trail connections, and the need for connectivity of trail systems for both recreation and active transportation.
- The need for adaptability in trail management, in order to be able to respond to new situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The importance of offering high quality trails that provide positive recreational experiences.

Backcountry Trails and Water Routes

Long-distance backcountry trails and water routes is an important topic for many respondents to the public survey, with many people commenting on the need for more multi-day trails across the Province, including land-based trails and water routes. The Mantario Trail in Whiteshell Provincial Park was repeatedly mentioned as a well-loved long-distance route that is now heavily used. People are seeking experiences similar to the Mantario in other parts of Manitoba, both for new experiences as well as to

reduce overuse of the Mantario. Respondents also commented on a desire for more overnight options for winter activities, such as skiing and snowshoeing.

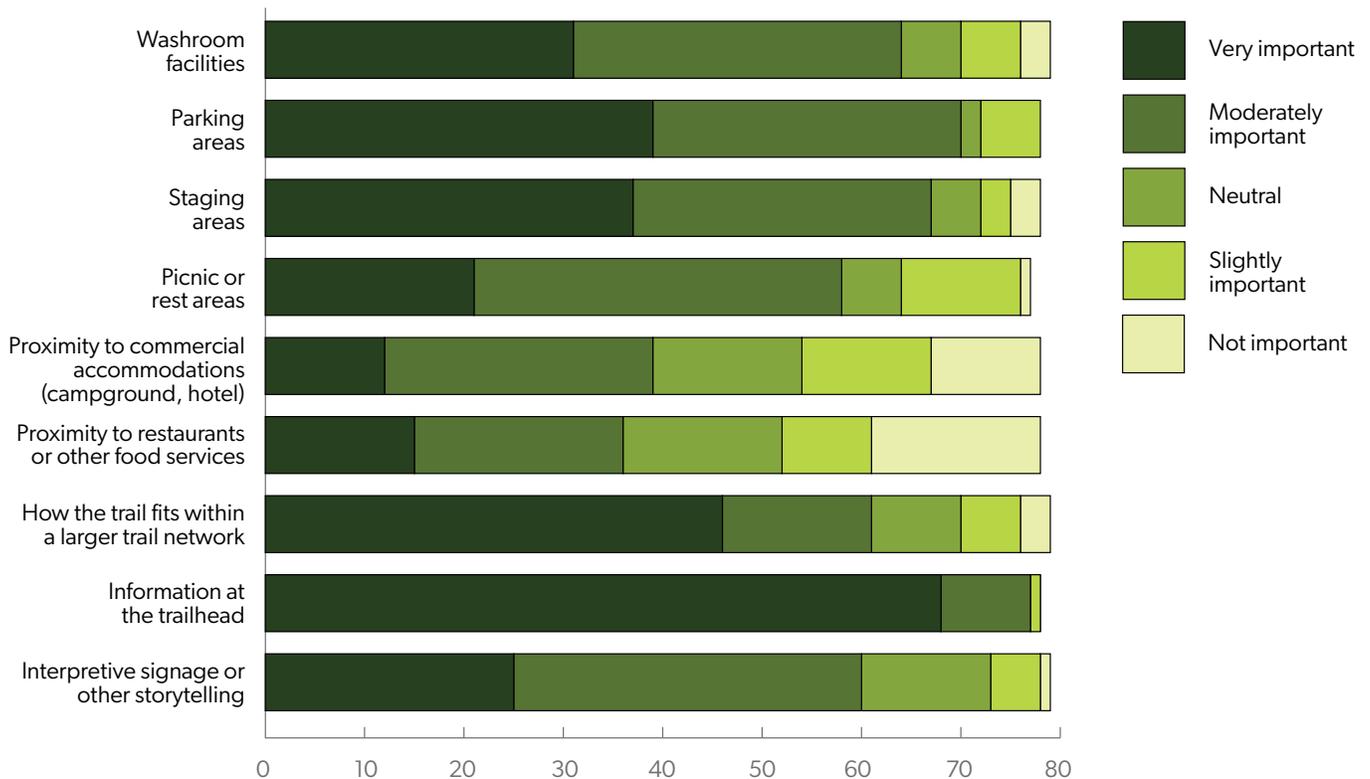
There were many comments about the demand for more canoe routes and canoeing campsites, with the most well known routes considered to be over-used and crowded, and it being difficult to find a designated campsite at times. This was a popular subject on the ideas page as well, with the idea “more backcountry camping please” receiving the highest number of “votes” (24) out of all of the ideas posted. Many survey respondents also commented on the state of backcountry camping facilities and routes in provincial parks. It was indicated there is a need for more maintenance of these routes and certain sites in particular, such as the Caddy Lake route, were mentioned as being in significant need of attention. Additional comments were made regarding the need for more specific amenities at backcountry sites, such as bear boxes, better-maintained pit privies/toilets, and portage signage. It was suggested that backcountry areas in provincial parks need either more designated campsites, or the rules to be changed so that users are allowed to camp wherever they like.

Numerous respondents stated that they are in favour of introducing a reservation or registration system for backcountry routes, with potential benefits being improved accountability for users, assurance for users that they will be able to find a campsite, the ability to manage over-use on the more popular routes, and a potential economic benefit if there is an associated fee. Some people are in favour of paying a fee for overnight trail use while others are not (i.e some supported a registration system but not an associated fee). For some, fees for remote routes are more justifiable as those are destination trails, their maintenance is more costly, and it was suggested implementing fees might help to reduce crowding.

Trail Facilities and Amenities

In the survey for trail groups and builders, participants were asked to rate the importance of various features at frontcountry and backcountry trails. The results are illustrated in the graph below. For a similar question regarding backcountry trails, the results were similar, but campsites located along the trail were also considered to be important.

Which of the following features are most important to consider when planning frontcountry trails?



In the public survey, participants were asked to indicate which factors matter most to them when choosing a trail. The most frequently selected choices were:

- There is good signage on the trail.
- The trail is suitable for activities I am interested in.
- The trail is suitable for my skill, experience or fitness level.
- The trail is high quality or well maintained.

Regarding the importance of various facilities and amenities, the most important for trails on land in both urban/rural and backcountry areas is information at the trailhead. For water routes, the most important is signage along the route to identify portages.

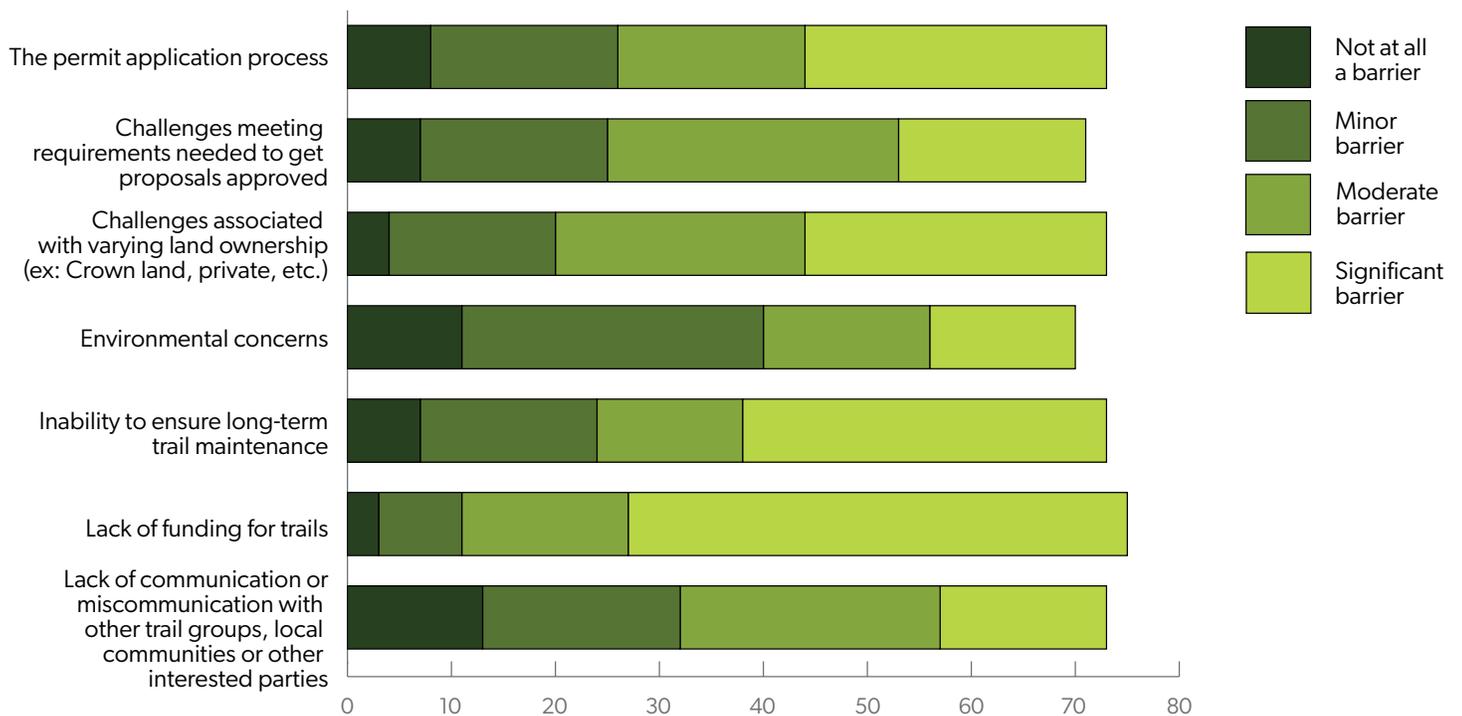
Public survey participants submitted a number of comments related to facilities and amenities needed to improve trails and meet the needs of trail users, such as more washrooms, parking areas, garbage cans (and garbage collection), warm-up shelters, and camping facilities for all users and/or designed for particular user groups such as horseback riders. A small number of comments were made in support of improved concessions or food options near trails, as well as the potential for trail use to provide benefits to restaurants, accommodations facilities and other commercial services in communities located near trails, particularly in connection to off-road vehicle use. In addition, comments were submitted expressing opposition to any kind of commercial facilities (food or otherwise) in backcountry areas.

Trail Planning and Design: Process and Barriers

In the survey for trail groups and builders, numerous barriers to trail development were identified.

Several respondents commented on the length of time the trail permitting process takes. Other comments related to the wait for archaeological assessments, challenges associated with many stakeholders and/or departments being involved, conflicts

In your experience, what has been a barrier to trail development in Manitoba?





between different user groups, and concerns about the load on volunteers. On a positive note, several respondents commented that they have a good working relationship with government staff and that this has improved in recent years. Suggestions for how the trail permitting process could be improved included:

- Many respondents stated that the length of time it takes to receive permit approvals must be decreased.
- In general, the process should be simplified and requirements clarified.
- Several suggested it would be easier if groups only had to deal with one government department/representative, instead of multiple.
- Communication must improve and there is a need to get everyone on the same page, including trail groups as well as government representatives.

Trail Maintenance and Signage

Both trail groups and the public commented on the need for more trail maintenance, with many trails having been created but then not maintained. Numerous respondents commented on the need for more maintenance and/or more frequent grooming on trails, either in general or on specific routes. Maintenance concerns range from basic garbage collection from trailheads, to more extensive work such as trail clearing, and boardwalk installation in certain areas. Many feel that more funding should be directed toward trail maintenance, whether it is the responsibility of government staff, municipalities or non-profit trail organizations. It was suggested that groups would benefit from having more information or guidelines on aspects such as recommended trail widths and clearing practices, and also that financial support is needed to replace aging trail maintenance equipment, which could potentially be shared between different groups.

In the public survey, numerous respondents commented on the need for more and/or improved signage at trailheads and along trails. Improved signage was cited as important both for improving the overall experience by providing more information about a trail route (either in terms of its physical characteristics or interpretive features), as well as for safety reasons to prevent people getting lost or embarking on trails that are longer or more difficult than they are prepared for. Some respondents suggested that Manitoba's trail signage and maintenance is lacking in comparison to other jurisdictions, and improvements are needed in order to improve the overall quality and draw of Manitoba's trails. Participants also commented on the need for trail signage to be more clear about permitted/designated uses on particular trails, such as trails that are for skiing only, and to provide more information about the multi-use nature of particular areas, such as areas where hunting, trapping or forestry is occurring. In addition, it was suggested there is a need for trail signage to promote improved trail user etiquette, such as by reminding people to "Leave No Trace."

Staffing and Trail Groups

Some public survey respondents included comments about the people responsible for managing, maintaining and developing trails, including volunteer or not-for-profit organizations, as well as government staff. Comments included:

- Trail groups and clubs struggle with limited or no funding, as well as the costs of things like liability insurance, proposing that more financial support for these groups is needed. Some people also commented on the need for local governments/municipalities to support and work with trail organizations in their area.
- It is important for different groups to communicate and work together to build relationships and improve coordination and cooperation.
- Government should direct more staff toward trail maintenance and clean up work, and have more park, Conservation Officer or other staff involved with monitoring trail uses. It was suggested that this work could be jobs for students.
- Several respondents stated that the river steward program should be restored.

Trail Information and Promotion

Many comments were submitted related to information on trails. In particular, survey respondents commented on what information is needed, how and where this information is provided to trail users, and how trails are promoted.

Availability and Quality of Information on Trails

Numerous survey respondents stated that trail information and maps available on Manitoba government websites is lacking, very difficult to find and/or out of date. It was indicated that there is a need for a centralized site so all trails-related information can be found in one place. When asked about what features would be most useful on a trails website and/or mobile app, nearly all suggested features were considered very or somewhat useful, with the highest valued being downloadable trail maps, trail descriptions and other details, current trail conditions and/or date of last grooming, and directions to the trailhead. The only feature that was not highly rated by the public was tour packages and promotions. However, it should be noted that this may not be surprising given that the survey was not targeted at tourists, who would be more in need of such a feature. Many people like the idea of an app that would provide a variety of information about Manitoba trails. However, a number of respondents mentioned there are already existing apps that provide this information and some suggested that the government should not spend money to create another version, or “reinvent the wheel”. However, some respondents noted that these existing apps do not include all trails province-wide, so they would like to see a new or different version that is all encompassing.

Other comments related to trail information and mapping included:

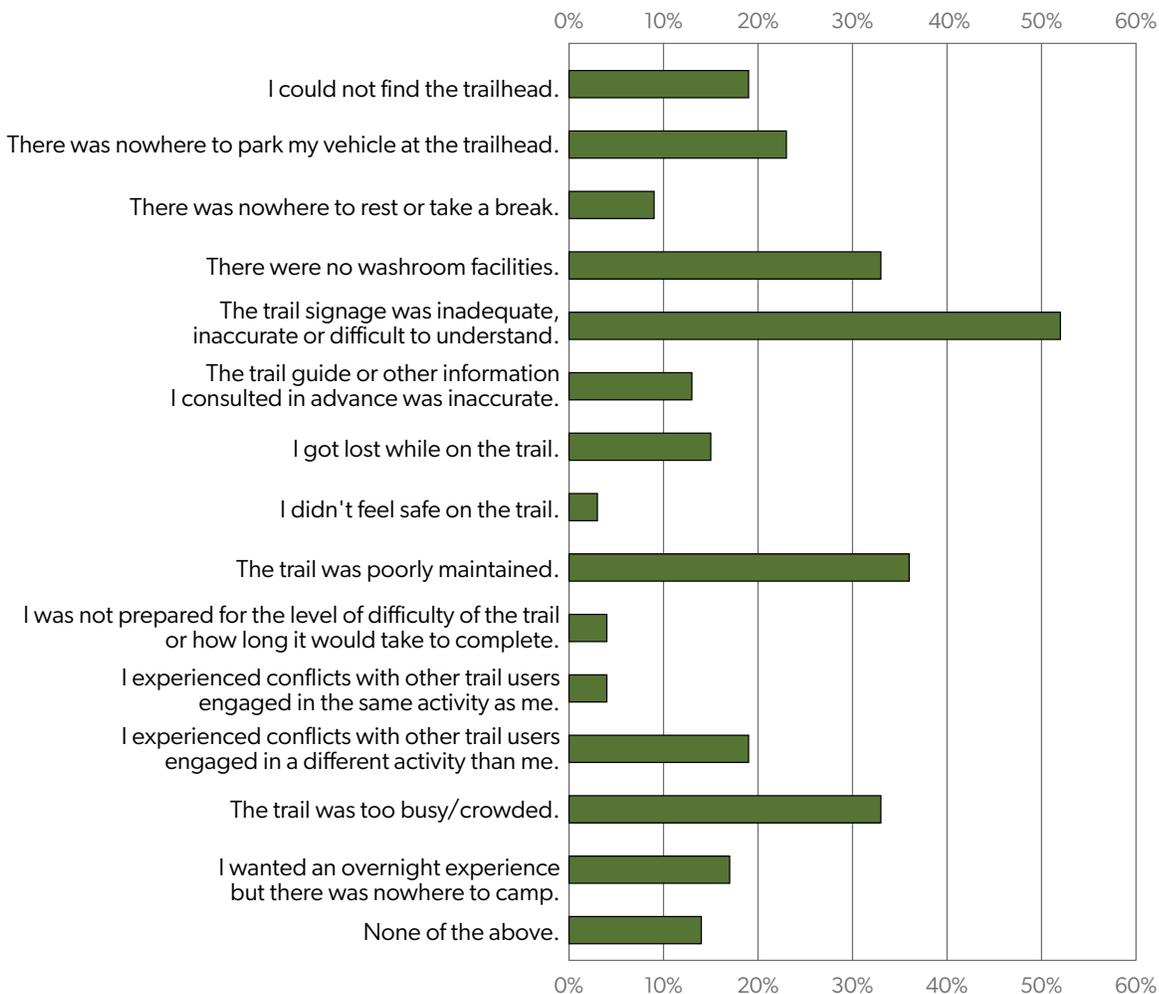
- It is important to use modern mapping technology, however trails information should not only be available online, as not everyone has a smartphone or good access to internet. Printable/paper maps should also continue to be available and posted in various locations.
- Promoting more trail use needs to be balanced with environmental protection and not encouraging overuse.
- Advertising efforts should promote particular trails as well as the health benefits of trail use.

Issues, Conflicts and the Need for Education and Etiquette

Many public survey participants submitted comments related to conflicts between trail users or user groups, concerns about particular trail uses or activities, and negative experiences on trails. Related to these issues, a strong level of support was expressed for the need for more education for trail users and improved etiquette.

Issues and Conflicts

In the last two years, have you experienced any of the following issues when using trails in Manitoba?



Some of the concerns noted on this subject were:

- Conflicts between different types of trail uses, in terms of activities being incompatible or unsafe to be conducted on the same trail, or certain activities causing damage to trails that are groomed for a particular activity. There was no one activity that stood out as being the most problematic. Rather, this is a problem that was reported by many different types of trail users: horseback riders, skiers, walkers/hikers, cyclists, motorized users, etc. Some respondents also commented on experiencing direct interpersonal conflicts on trails, such as having been verbally accosted by someone engaged in a different activity. Respondents feel that more needs to be done to manage use of trails and prevent inappropriate, destructive or unsafe uses of trails. Notably, 19 per cent of survey participants indicated that they have experienced conflicts with trail users engaged in a different activity than them, while only four per cent have experienced conflicts with trail users engaged in the same activity.
- Comments about conflicting trail uses are an issue for individual trail users as well as trail clubs involved with grooming for activities such as skiing and snowmobiling. It was noted that clubs spend much time and resources on grooming trails, only to often have the groomed path wrecked by people engaged in an activity for which the trail is not designated.
- While many respondents feel that trail users need to be better informed about trail designations and appropriate uses, it was also felt that trail users need to work together more and find ways to share trails.

- A number of respondents stated that they believe motorized use of trails should be more limited, or there should be more enforcement of off-road vehicle use to keep vehicles off non-motorized trails. Other respondents generally commented on the need for more enforcement or monitoring on trails and at trailheads.
- Numerous respondents also commented on issues with off-leash dogs on trails. Concerns about this issue included the potential for conflict with other trail users, other dogs or with wildlife, as well as dog owners not picking up their pets' waste.
- Many people are concerned about littering, human waste and vandalism on trails and at trailheads. Respondents noted that these issues have increased significantly over the past year as trail use increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was also a concern in relation to the potential for food and garbage to be an attractant to wildlife.
- Concerns about littering and waste are an issue for water route users, with comments submitted regarding damage to backcountry campsites, makeshift tables and other "furniture" left behind, human waste on campsites, and fuel and boat caches left by outfitters or other users.
- Numerous respondents also commented about concerns regarding overcrowding on trails, and associated issues with crowded parking areas. Again, increased trail use resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic heightened this problem. This was a concern in terms of too many people on the trail resulting in a negative trail experience instead of positive (i.e. people want to use trails to get away from crowds and experience quiet or solitude), as well as the potential for over-use of trails to cause damage to the trail surface or surrounding environment.

When trail groups were asked about how different groups can effectively share trails, the top three choices were: increase communication and joint planning by different trail user groups; increase and/or improve signage and messaging around sharing trails; and host trail user organization meet and greets or other social events.

Numerous public survey respondents commented on environmental concerns in relation to trail use and development. These comments included concerns about the impacts of trail use and increasing access on wildlife and their habitat, the potential for trail use to cause the spread of invasive species, and wildfire risks associated with off-road vehicle use in dry conditions. Respondents feel that biodiversity conservation and maintaining ecological integrity should be a priority when considering new trail development or re-routing trails, and that some natural areas should remain free of trail development. Other related suggestions included to periodically close over-used trails to allow rehabilitation, monitor trails for environmental impacts, and consider opportunities for habitat restoration as part of trail projects.

Other concerns mentioned included: trails on private property without authorization; safety concerns resulting from lack of cell service in certain areas and people being unprepared; and safety concerns during hunting season. It was suggested that more resources should be put into safety services (such as Search and Rescue services) before additional trail development and promotion takes place.

Education and Etiquette

Many survey respondents who commented on issues such as misuse of trails, overcrowding and other such problems specifically stated there is a need for more education for trail users and improved behaviour. Respondents commented on the need for trails-related education for all ages to improve understanding and respect for trails, safety, the environment and other trail users. It was suggested that more education is needed to inform trail users about topics such as who has the right-of-way on trails as well as basic courtesy, wildlife safety, being properly prepared and the importance of staying on the trail. Many people specifically commented on the need for trail users to be educated about the principles of Leave No Trace.

It was suggested that this type of education could be provided in different ways, including through social media, as part of in-person sessions or courses, from staff or volunteers at trailheads, via signage and through a coordinated public awareness campaign. Some feel that more challenging trails should potentially have some type of orientation session required. Alternatively, it was suggested that implementing a registration system for certain overnight or long-distance routes would provide the opportunity to share or promote information related to Leave No Trace and trail safety. A few comments were also submitted commenting on the potential value of offering other educational materials or programs for trail users, such as information for beginners, connecting schools to trails, and more programming focused on the natural environment within which trails are located.

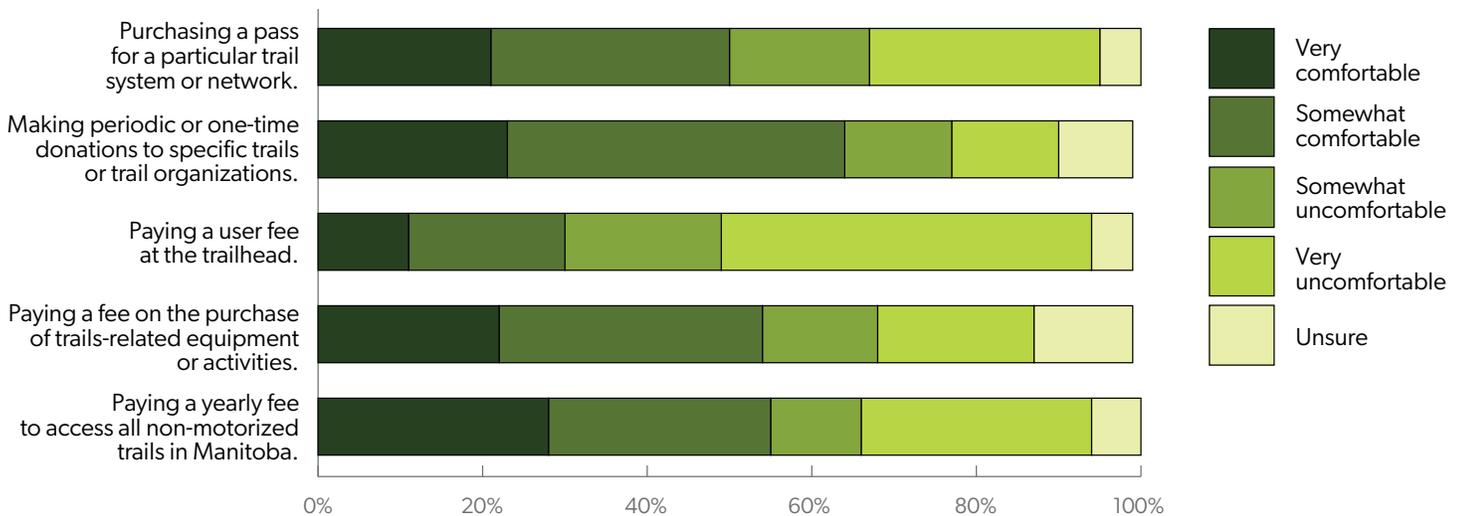
Consideration of Other Trail Uses and Activities

A handful of comments submitted through the public survey as well as via email were regarding the need for more consideration to be given to trail users who are not using trails for recreational purposes such as hiking or biking, but are engaged in resource-based activities such as hunting and trapping. Concerns were expressed regarding trails originally developed by trappers subsequently being “taken over” by recreational trail clubs, as well as recreational trail development or designation resulting in restrictions on existing hunting and trapping activities. These respondents feel that resource-based users should be more consulted on the trail designation process, and that further development of the recreational trail system should not take place if it would result in more restrictions on hunters and trappers. It was also suggested that more signage is needed to inform people of where or when hunting and trapping activities are occurring near trails.

Trail Fees and Funding

A significant amount of public survey participants submitted comments related to trail fees and funding. When asked about particular user-pay ideas to support trail building and maintenance, there were no options that a majority of respondents are “very comfortable” with.

How comfortable are you with the following user-pay ideas to support trail building and maintenance?



Many survey respondents commented that they do not support charging fees for use of trails, especially for those trails located in provincial or national parks, where visitors already pay access/entry fees. Feedback included:

- Numerous respondents commented that introducing or increasing fees for trails creates an additional barrier for those who cannot afford to pay. This was reflected in the response to a separate survey question regarding barriers to trail use (described below), in which 19 per cent of respondents indicated that the cost of trail passes or entry fees are a barrier preventing them from using trails.
- People feel that access to nature, fresh air, etc. is very important, provides significant benefits and should be free.
- If there are fees then people will avoid marked trails and create new, unauthorized trails, causing environmental damage as well as potential safety risks.
- Existing revenue generated through taxes and park passes should be enough to support trail maintenance and management.
- Trail fees would be too difficult to enforce.
- Use is too variable for a fee system to be fair or effective. Some people use many trails, while some only use one or a few. The level of maintenance or attention paid to individual trails also varies greatly.

Some respondents stated that they are not opposed to paying more for trail use or paying for a yearly or regional pass. Of those, many acknowledged that they could afford this but others could not, suggesting a sliding price scale should be used. Also, some said they would only be willing to pay more if it meant that the trails they use would benefit – i.e. be better quality or have enhanced maintenance. A handful of respondents also suggested that, if necessary, there should be an increase to the cost of the provincial park vehicle permit, rather than a new, separate fee for trails.

Other comments related to fees included that fees for particular types of groomed trails that are more costly to maintain are more justifiable than fees for hiking or other lower maintenance trails. Some also indicated that they support fees only for particular experiences, such as overnight trips. It was suggested that information should be provided to explain how much trail-related features, such as a bench or signage, cost. Some respondents provided suggestions on how to generate trails-related revenue through trail use without charging for actual use of trails, such as:

- More enforcement of ticketable offences, such as lack of provincial park vehicle permit.
- Sell merchandise such as a trails book or license plate.
- Corporate sponsorship of trails.
- Add donation boxes at trailheads or provide other donation mechanisms.

Funding

In addition to the comments about trail fees, numerous public survey participants also commented about funding for trails. Many people stated that not-for-profit trail organizations need more and sustainable funding. Some feel that the current funding for these groups is unequal; in particular, some people commented that off-road vehicle organizations should receive more funding. A number of people also made general comments suggesting that the government should increase funding for trail development and maintenance.

Respondents to the survey for trail groups and builders also commented on trail funding. These comments included:

- Trail groups need more support.
- Develop a funding model to support trail maintenance.
- Direct tax dollars generated through trail-related activities (ex. sales of machines, gear, accommodations, etc.) toward trail groups.
- A user-pay system is the best way to drive trail expansion and maintenance.

Off-road Vehicle Pass Systems

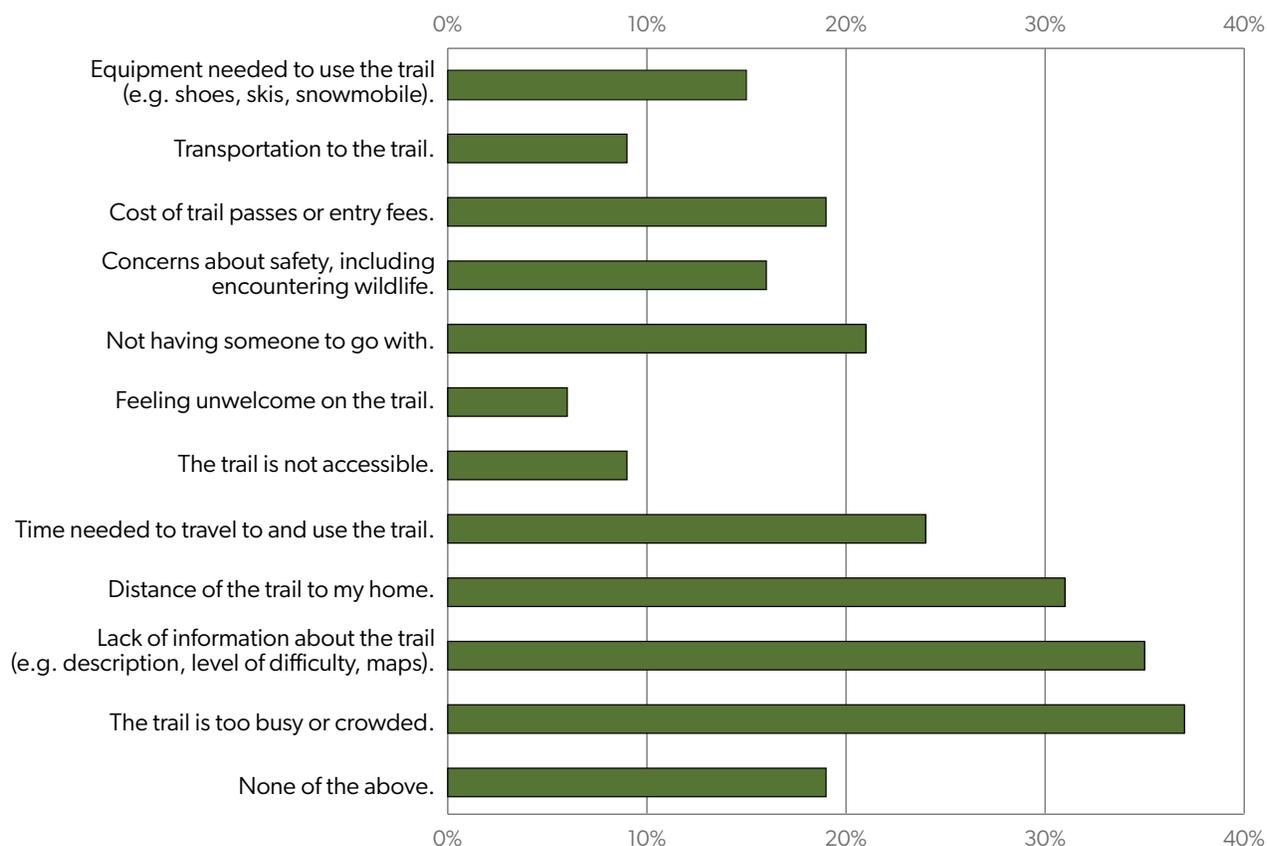
Some public survey respondents made comments specifically regarding pass systems for off-road vehicles, including comments about the existing Snopass system for snowmobiles, as well as a potential pass system for ATVs. Comments on this subject were mixed, with some people expressing support for the Snopass system, while others indicated they are opposed to the Snopass. Some feel that the Snopass is too expensive for those who don't use the designated trails very much or who have more than one snowmobile, or that there has been insufficient public input in the past when new Snoman trails have been designated. It was suggested that the price of the Snopass should be reduced and/or more flexibility should be introduced in order to improve overall compliance with the system.

A number of respondents indicated they would like to see a system similar to the Snopass established for ATVs, based on either a shared trail system, with trails shared for snowmobiles and ATVs, or a separate ATV trail system. Concerns were also expressed about ATV use of snowmobile trails that are managed by snowmobile clubs, and resulting damage to trails. Some respondents stated that more financial support is needed for off-road vehicle organizations, and that some form of incentive should be created to encourage more users to become off-road vehicle club members.

Inclusion, Accessibility and Volunteering

Public survey participants were asked about their own potential barriers to trail use, as well as how to make trails more accessible and inclusive for people with reduced mobility or who face other types of barriers. A subset of survey questions and comments were also focused on volunteering and getting people involved with trail work and related activities.

Do any of the following barriers prevent you from using trails?



Regarding accessibility, the responses were quite mixed. In terms of inclusivity, the option considered to be the most impactful was to increase the number of trails located in close proximity to communities. The other top options were to introduce trails to children and teens through school and community programming, and offer free or low-cost entry or trail passes. The survey for trail groups and builders also included a question on this subject, with similar results. In that survey, participants also feel that ensuring that trail communications (information and promotions) are reaching diverse audiences is important.

The public survey included an open-ended question on accessibility, to provide respondents the opportunity to comment on other ways to make trails more accessible. Comments that were specifically related to physical accessibility for those with disabilities or other such barriers to access included:

- Develop more trails (or modify existing trails) in different areas of the province that meet accessibility requirements, in order to provide a greater number and more variety of accessible trails for people living in different areas.
- Provide more information about accessible trails, as well as specific details such as elevation changes, so it is easier for people to find trails that meet their needs.
- Provide more and different transportation options to increase access to trails.
- Increase the quantity and/or quality of signs at trailheads and along trails, include features or design techniques on signs that meet accessibility recommendations, and provide interpretive information in different formats, such as an audio guide.

- Incorporate amenities and facilities at staging and parking areas to accommodate those with physical disabilities or particular needs related to staging and access (ex. more accessible washrooms and parking areas, accessible boat ramps and docks, etc.).
- Consider the accessibility of scenic viewpoints and other trail-related features, not just the trail surface.
- Provide opportunities to rent adaptive equipment, such as adaptive bikes.

By suggesting specific ideas or just general support for the concept, many respondents indicated they are in favour of improving the physical accessibility of certain trails. It was also noted that groups representing individuals with disabilities should specifically be consulted on this subject. However, a handful of people expressed concern or opposition to the idea of making trails more accessible. In most cases, it appeared that this opposition was because these respondents were under the impression that it was being suggested that all trails should be made more accessible. Numerous respondents indicated that they support making some trails more accessible, but stressed the importance of maintaining a balance and leaving many trails “natural” (i.e. not paved or widened, etc.). Other subjects that people commented on for this question included personal or physical safety on trails, including the implementation and enforcement of rules or restrictions, and the need for improved or more frequent maintenance on trails or their access routes.

As with the above question on accessibility, the public survey also included an open-ended question on inclusivity, to provide respondents the opportunity to comment on other ways to make trails more inclusive. In response to this question, many people expressed support for making trails more inclusive, while a small number felt that this is not a concern that needs to be addressed. Some respondents were opposed to efforts to increase inclusivity, as they felt that trails are already crowded and/or would be negatively impacted by an increase in users, so efforts should not be made to encourage more people to use them, unless more trails are developed.

Comments relating to inclusivity were:

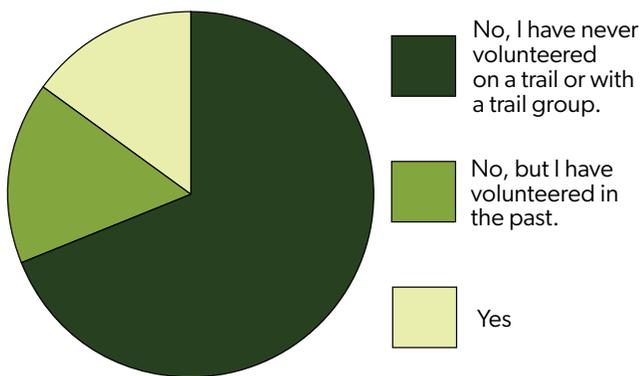
- Some people commented about the potential for trail fees or passes to be a barrier to trail use. They expressed opposition to fees of any kind, or suggested that if there are fees then there should be a sliding price scale or a free or low-cost option for those with financial constraints.
- Many respondents suggested that education and etiquette for trail users is important as part of any measures to make trails more inclusive. It is felt this is important for improving understanding and respect, as well as to help people feel safe on the trails and comfortable in unfamiliar areas. In addition, animosity between different types of trail users should be addressed, as some trail users make others feel unwelcome or intimidated. The focus should be on working together to improve trail use and understanding, rather than being confrontational.
- Increase guided walks and tours, and promote information about trail organizations offering group events, so that more people can try out trails that they would not be comfortable visiting alone. Similarly, offer programs to pair new trail users with experienced trail mentors or “buddies.”
- Work to ensure a representative and diverse workforce in provincial parks, and increase the number of staff available to provide information about trails and interpretation. Staff, volunteers and related programs should be diverse and be available in different languages so that all people feel welcome.
- Information and promotion about trails should be increased. This is important to give people a better understanding of which trails are appropriate for their skill or experience level, as well as to better inform people about what trail options are available to them. Trails-related information and promotional materials should also include more diverse people and be made available in multiple languages.
- Work with community, cultural and newcomer groups, as well as schools, to create safe and welcoming opportunities for people to try using trails, and to introduce trails to people at a young age. Also, partner with organizations that provide rental equipment (snowshoes, GPS, etc.) and education and training on different trail activities or trail safety and preparation.
- Ensure that Indigenous perspectives are considered. More information about Indigenous Peoples’ history, and past and current use of land, should be shared, including noting whose traditional territories or what Treaty area trails are located on.
- Trail facilities, amenities and signage should be designed and built with a variety of users in mind. This includes consideration of the needs of those with disabilities, those for whom English is not their first language, and options such as gender-neutral signage on washroom buildings.
- Increase transportation options to trails outside of urban areas, so more people can access them. Suggested examples include providing shuttle services, improving bike network connections, and low-cost or free bus transportation.

Apart from the specific survey questions regarding the accessibility and inclusivity of trails, a number of respondents made comments relating to access to trails for those with physical disabilities, and/or improving the inclusion of those from varied social, economic or cultural backgrounds. Some survey respondents also commented on the need to work with Indigenous, community or social organizations on trail development and management. It was suggested that the government should partner with organizations doing work to include Indigenous representation in decision-making. Participants also noted the importance of consulting Indigenous communities on decisions related to trail development and expansion, as well as incorporating Indigenous information and history in interpretive materials.

Volunteering

Of those respondents who do not currently volunteer on trails, 42 per cent indicated they are interested in volunteering in the future. The most common reasons for not currently volunteering were “I am not aware of volunteer opportunities” and “I do not have the time right now”.

Do you currently volunteer on a trail or with a trail group?



Additional comments related to volunteering included:

- Concerns about a lack of new, younger volunteers coming in to replace older volunteers (particularly in the case of snowmobile clubs), and concern that this may result in some clubs or trails closing as volunteers or resources become too scarce to continue.
- Some respondents indicated they feel existing volunteer opportunities are limited, particularly in provincial parks, and they feel that different types of volunteer opportunities should be made available. In contrast, it was also suggested that trail work should not be done by volunteers, and that people should be paid to do this work.
- It was suggested that students could be introduced to volunteer trail work through incorporating this in school programming. Another idea was to plan trail maintenance days where individuals could come out to help work on particular projects.

Next Steps

The Manitoba government has prepared a Manitoba Trails Strategy, based on discussions and analysis within government, a stakeholder and public engagement process, and research into trail strategies and management practices in other jurisdictions. The Strategy is undergoing final revisions and will be available for public review in the coming months.

For more information, visit the [Manitoba Trails Strategy page on EngageMB](#) or email MBTrails@gov.mb.ca.

Appendix A: Manitoba Trails Strategy Public Survey – Quantitative Data

Note: The percentages listed in the tables below are based on the total number of responses to individual questions, not the total number of survey participants overall. The number of responses to each question is shown as “N.”

How familiar are you with existing recreational trails in Manitoba?	(N = 2022)
Very familiar	27%
Moderately familiar	49%
Slightly familiar	22%
Not at all familiar	2%
TOTAL	100%

In the last two years, have you used trails in Manitoba for recreational use and/or for your occupation or livelihood?	(N = 2022)
Yes	96%
No	4%
TOTAL	100%

For what purpose do you use trails in Manitoba?	(N = 1932)
For recreation purposes only.	85%
In relation to my occupation or livelihood only.	1%
Both recreationally and in relation to my occupation or livelihood.	14%
TOTAL	100%

In the last 2 years, where have you used trails? Select all that apply.	(N = 1930)
Northern Manitoba (e.g. Paint Lake Provincial Park, Grass River System)	14%
Central Manitoba (e.g. Beaudry Provincial Park, Pembina Valley Provincial Park)	56%
Eastern Manitoba (e.g. Birds Hill Provincial Park, Whiteshell Provincial Park, Mars Hill Wildlife Management Area)	86%
Interlake Manitoba (e.g. Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park)	51%
Parkland Manitoba (e.g. Riding Mountain National Park, Duck Mountain Provincial Park)	54%
Western Manitoba (e.g. Spruce Woods Provincial Park)	53%
Winnipeg	68%

Where would you like to use trails in the future? Select all that apply. (N = 2009)

Northern Manitoba (e.g. Paint Lake Provincial Park, Grass River System)	49%
Central Manitoba (e.g. Beaudry Provincial Park, Pembina Valley Provincial Park)	69%
Eastern Manitoba (e.g. Birds Hill Provincial Park, Whiteshell Provincial Park, Mars Hill Wildlife Management Area)	85%
Interlake Manitoba (e.g. Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park)	71%
Parkland Manitoba (e.g. Riding Mountain National Park, Duck Mountain Provincial Park)	73%
Western Manitoba (e.g. Spruce Woods Provincial Park)	72%
Winnipeg	63%

Why do you use trails in Manitoba? Select all that apply. (N = 1931)

Social connections	52%
Exercise/Fitness	90%
For pleasure	96%
For active transportation	26%
Relaxation or mental wellness	85%
To be outdoors or to enjoy nature	96%
As part of vacation plans	63%
For work purposes	11%
Other	8%

What type of trail activities do you take part in? Select all that apply. (N = 1931)

Walking	88%	Skijoring	4%
Hiking	84%	Dog sledding	2%
Running	27%	Snowshoeing	35%
Birding and wildlife viewing	42%	Snowmobiling	21%
Manual wheelchair rolling	0%*	All-Terrain Vehicle and/or Side by Side Riding	18%
Cycling	43%	Paddling (canoe, kayak and/or stand up paddle boarding)	51%
Mountain biking	35%	Motorized boating	15%
Fat biking	10%	Hunting	13%
Cross-country skiing	46%	Fishing	31%
Skate skiing	9%	Trapping	3%
Horseback riding	8%	Other	5%

*Note: Nine people selected manual wheelchair rolling, which equals 0.005% of respondents

Which trail activities would you like to try, but have not? Select all that apply.

(N = 2021)

Walking	4%	Dog sledding	25%
Hiking	5%	Snowshoeing	21%
Running	4%	Snowmobiling	12%
Manual wheelchair rolling	1%	All-Terrain Vehicle and/or Side by Side Riding	13%
Cycling	9%	Paddling (canoe, kayak and/or stand up paddle boarding)	20%
Mountain biking	15%	Motorized boating	6%
Fat biking	27%	Birding and wildlife viewing	10%
Cross-country skiing	20%	Hunting	7%
Skate skiing	14%	Fishing	8%
Horseback riding	18%	Trapping	6%
Skijoring	14%	None of the above.	19%

**When choosing a trail, which of the following factors matter most to you?
Select up to three choices.**

(N = 1930)

The trail is high quality or well maintained.	47%
The trail has a variety of amenities (e.g. washrooms, viewpoints, nearby food services).	15%
There is good signage on the trail.	57%
The trail is suitable for my skill, experience or fitness level.	50%
The trail is suitable for young/small children.	7%
The trail is accessible or offers low-mobility options.	2%
The trail is suitable for activities that I am interested in (e.g. mountain biking, birding).	53%
The trail is one I am familiar with, so I know what to expect.	8%
The trail is one I haven't visited before, so it will be a new experience for me.	33%

In the last two years, have you experienced any of the following issues when using trails in Manitoba? Select all that apply.

(N = 1931)

I could not find the trailhead.	19%
There was nowhere to park my vehicle at the trailhead.	23%
There was nowhere to rest or take a break.	9%
There were no washroom facilities.	33%
The trail signage was inadequate, inaccurate or difficult to understand.	52%
The trail guide or other information I consulted in advance was inaccurate.	13%
I got lost while on the trail.	15%
I didn't feel safe on the trail.	3%
The trail was poorly maintained.	36%
I was not prepared for the level of difficulty of the trail or how long it would take to complete.	4%
I experienced conflicts with other trail users engaged in the same activity as me.	4%
I experienced conflicts with other trail users engaged in a different activity than me.	19%
The trail was too busy/crowded.	33%
I wanted an overnight experience but there was nowhere to camp.	17%
None of the above.	14%

On average, how often do you access trails in Manitoba?

(N = 1931)

	Spring	Fall	Summer	Winter
Daily	10%	14%	20%	10%
Weekly	47%	54%	58%	46%
Monthly	30%	25%	17%	29%
Once a season	11%	7%	4%	10%
Never	2%	1%	1%	5%

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, has your frequency of trail use in Manitoba increased, decreased, or remained about the same?

(N = 1931)

Increased	49%
Decreased	10%
About the same	41%
TOTAL	100%

In the last two years, have you gone on a multi-day trip or tour on a trail in Manitoba?

(N = 1931)

Yes, a multi-day trip on land (e.g. backpacking).	24%
Yes, a multi-day trip on water (e.g. canoeing).	20%
I've been on a multi-day trip, but not in the last two years.	20%
No	47%

How likely are you to go on a multi-day trip or tour in the future?

(N = 1931)

	Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely	Unsure
Multi-day trip on land, using existing trails.	36%	29%	15%	12%	8%
Multi-day trip on existing water routes.	26%	26%	19%	20%	9%
Multi-day trip on land that uses a new trail or offers new trail options.	28%	30%	16%	13%	14%
Multi-day trip on water that uses a new water route or offers new route options.	20%	20%	23%	22%	15%

In the last two years, what types of trails have you used? Select all that apply.

(N = 1931)

Trails on land in urban or rural areas	93%
Backcountry trails in remote areas	66%
Water routes in urban or rural areas	40%
Water routes in backcountry/remote areas	35%

Trails on land in urban or rural areas:

Which of the following types of trails on land have you used? Select all that apply.

(N = 1787)

Urban – paved	73%
Urban – not paved but groomed/maintained	82%
Urban - unmaintained trails	52%
Rural – paved	44%
Rural – not paved but groomed/maintained	92%
Rural - unmaintained trails	69%

Trails on land in urban or rural areas:

When using this type of trail, how important are the following on-site facilities/amenities to you?

(N = 1787)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Washroom facilities	24%	59%	17%
Picnic areas at the trailhead	6%	42%	52%
Garbage disposal at the trailhead	54%	33%	13%
A paved trail surface	1%	12%	87%
Benches/rest areas along the trail	7%	41%	52%
Rain/warm-up shelters	11%	51%	39%
Information at the trailhead	65%	31%	4%
Interpretive signage or other storytelling	19%	53%	28%
Viewpoints/scenic lookouts along the trail	35%	54%	12%
Having a destination at the end of the trail	15%	52%	33%
That the trail is a loop (as opposed to an out-and-back trail)	20%	52%	27%
Proximity to commercial accommodations (campground, hotel)	4%	33%	63%
Proximity to restaurants or other food services	3%	25%	72%
Connection to other trails or recreation opportunities	13%	56%	31%
Internet	3%	16%	82%
Cell service	25%	46%	29%

Trails on land in backcountry/remote areas:

When using this type of trail, how important are the following on-site facilities/amenities to you?

(N = 1276)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Washroom facilities	16%	45%	39%
Picnic areas at the trailhead	5%	32%	63%
Interpretive signage or other storytelling	15%	39%	46%
Viewpoints/scenic lookouts along the trail	32%	49%	19%
Having a destination at the end of the trail	17%	47%	36%
Garbage disposal at the trailhead	46%	31%	22%
Rain/warm-up shelters	15%	43%	42%
Information at the trailhead	61%	30%	9%
Benches/rest areas along the trail	5%	28%	67%
That the trail is a loop (as opposed to an out-and-back trail)	18%	46%	36%
Proximity to commercial accommodations (campground, hotel)	3%	27%	69%
Proximity to restaurants or other food services	3%	20%	77%
Connection to other trails or recreation opportunities	10%	50%	40%
Campsites located along the trail	30%	40%	29%
Cell service	24%	41%	35%
Shuttle service	2%	19%	79%

Trails on water in backcountry/remote areas:

When using this type of trail, how important are the following on-site facilities/amenities to you?

(N = 671)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Picnic areas at the trailhead	4%	30%	66%
Signage along the route to identify portages and campsites	60%	30%	10%
Route details and maps at the trailhead	58%	29%	14%
Garbage disposal at the trailhead	47%	29%	24%
Designated campsites with facilities including pit privy toilets and bear boxes	43%	38%	18%
Historical information about the route at the trailhead	19%	52%	29%
That the route is a loop (as opposed to an out-and-back route)	11%	41%	48%
The ability to camp wherever I choose, not only at designated sites	35%	42%	22%
Proximity of the trailhead to restaurants or other food services	1%	13%	86%
Well-maintained portages with boardwalks, wooden steps, etc. as needed	23%	49%	28%
Shuttle service	3%	21%	76%
Cell service	16%	38%	46%

Do any of the following barriers prevent you from using trails? Select all that apply.

(N = 2021)

Equipment needed to use the trail (e.g. shoes, skis, snowmobile).	15%
Transportation to the trail.	9%
Cost of trail passes or entry fees.	19%
Concerns about safety, including encountering wildlife.	16%
Not having someone to go with.	21%
Feeling unwelcome on the trail.	6%
The trail is not accessible.	9%
Time needed to travel to and use the trail.	24%
Distance of the trail to my home.	31%
Lack of information about the trail (e.g. description, level of difficulty, maps).	35%
The trail is too busy or crowded.	37%
None of the above.	19%

We're looking for suggestions on ways to make trails accessible for visitors with varying degrees of mobility. How much impact would the following have on making trails more accessible? (N = 2020)

	Major impact	Moderate impact	Little or no impact	Unsure
Provide transportation to accessible trails.	16%	25%	36%	23%
Provide options to rent adaptive equipment such as bikes and trail riders.	20%	31%	28%	21%
Provide accessible parking and washrooms at trailheads.	31%	35%	20%	13%
Have days where trail groups or associations bring those with diverse needs on group excursions.	25%	27%	27%	21%
Make more of the existing trails accessible for visitors with varying degrees of mobility.	24%	33%	24%	20%

We're looking for suggestions on ways to make trails more inclusive in Manitoba. How much impact would the following have on making trails more inclusive? (N = 2020)

	Major impact	Moderate impact	Little or no impact	Unsure
Increase the number of trails located in close proximity to communities.	48%	37%	9%	7%
Provide low-cost options to rent equipment such as footwear or skis.	31%	37%	21%	11%
Provide low-cost transportation options to trails.	23%	30%	32%	16%
Introduce trails to children and teens through school and community programming.	52%	31%	10%	6%
Promote information about trails to diverse audiences.	39%	37%	15%	9%
Promote diversity and inclusion in marketing campaigns about trails.	27%	35%	26%	12%
Provide information about trails in multiple languages.	25%	34%	28%	13%
Make all visitors feel welcome and secure.	44%	33%	15%	9%
Offer free/low-cost entry or trail passes.	49%	28%	15%	9%

Are you a member of a trails-related organization? (N = 2021)

Yes	27%
No	73%
TOTAL	100%

Which best describes your role with the trails-related organization? (N = 550)

Member	61%
Volunteer	17%
Board Member	21%
Employee	1%
TOTAL	100%

Do you currently volunteer on a trail or with a trail group?	(N = 2021)
Yes	15%
No, but I have volunteered in the past.	16%
No, I have never volunteered on a trail or with a trail group.	69%
TOTAL	100%

Do you prefer to volunteer as part of organized events/activities or on your own?	(N = 307)
As part of organized events/activities	41%
On my own	20%
No preference	40%
TOTAL	100%

What is your role as a volunteer on a trail/with a trail group? Select all that apply.	(N = 307)
Trail development	57%
Maintenance/grooming	79%
Trail monitoring	42%
Trail clean-up events	59%
Assist with organizing trail-related events	46%
Fundraising	40%
Website and/or social media	21%
Other	11%

What prevents you from currently volunteering? Select all that apply.	(N = 1714)
My previous volunteer experience on a trail/with a group was not a positive one.	1%
I am not aware of volunteer opportunities.	47%
No one has ever asked me to volunteer.	29%
I do not have the time right now.	43%
I don't think I have the right skills or knowledge about trails.	16%
Other	13%

Are you interested in volunteering on a trail or with a trail group in the future?	(N = 1714)
Yes	42%
No	17%
Unsure	41%
TOTAL	100%

**As a volunteer on a trail/with a trail group, what would you be interested in helping with?
Select all that apply.**

(N = 714)

Trail development	68%
Maintenance/grooming	69%
Trail monitoring	49%
Trail clean-up events	67%
Assist with organizing trail-related events	42%
Fundraising	15%
Website and/or social media	19%
Other	4%

As a volunteer, would you prefer to volunteer as part of organized events/activities or on your own?

(N = 714)

As part of organized events/activities	37%
On my own	14%
No preference	49%
TOTAL	100%

How comfortable are you with the following user-pay ideas to support trail building and maintenance?

(N = 2019)

	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable	Unsure
Purchasing a pass for a particular trail system or network.	21%	29%	17%	28%	5%
Making periodic or one-time donations to specific trails or trail organizations.	23%	41%	13%	13%	9%
Paying a user fee at the trailhead.	11%	19%	19%	45%	5%
Paying a fee on the purchase of trails-related equipment or activities.	22%	32%	14%	19%	12%
Paying a yearly fee to access all non-motorized trails in Manitoba.	29%	27%	11%	28%	6%

How useful would you find the following features on a trails website and/or mobile app?

(N = 2021)

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful at all	Unsure
Downloadable trail maps	81%	15%	2%	1%
Location tracking for use when on the trail	59%	27%	9%	5%
Directions to the trailhead	70%	25%	4%	1%
Trail descriptions, difficulty ratings, permitted uses and photos	75%	22%	3%	1%
Current trail conditions and/or date of last trail grooming	71%	24%	4%	1%
Ability for users to contribute photos or other information, and report trail issues	55%	36%	7%	3%
Information on the local area (accommodations, food services, attractions, etc.)	33%	48%	16%	4%
Suggested routes and itineraries	43%	45%	9%	3%
Tour packages and promotions	12%	31%	47%	10%
Volunteer sign-up opportunities	27%	50%	14%	9%
Option to make financial donations to specific trails or trail groups	27%	50%	15%	9%

In which region of Manitoba do you live?

(N = 2008)

Northern Manitoba	2%
Central Manitoba	7%
Eastern Manitoba	16%
Interlake Manitoba	7%
Parkland Manitoba	3%
Western Manitoba	7%
Winnipeg	57%

What is your age?

(N = 2002)

Under 18	0%*
18-24	5%
25-34	21%
35-44	25%
45-54	20%
55-64	19%
65+	10%

*Note: Four people selected Under 18, which equals 0.002% of respondents.