



Vail Daily

Parking doesn't come cheap

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Vail Daily Editorial Board

No one likes to pay more, but a hike in Vail's parking fees is overdue.

The town needs to bring in more money to pay for the rising cost of gas and recruitment. Especially now that a shortage of H-2B visas means the town of Vail will have to spend more money trying to hire bus drivers and parking attendants for the winter.

Town officials want to raise parking prices anywhere from 25 percent to 100 percent this winter, with \$25 for a full day's parking being the most popular price mentioned.

Paying \$5 to \$7 more to park near the slopes all day isn't going to keep out-of-towners from coming to Vail.

Local residents will likely keep doing what they've been doing for years: wait until the parking garages fill up so they can park for free on the frontage roads; park away from the slopes and ride the town bus to the base of the mountain; continue to take advantage of any secret parking spot they've been using; or just ski Beaver Creek.

And for those times when a skier needs to park close to the mountain, well, they'll just have to cough up the dough.

It makes sense to link the cost of running the parking garage and the town's bus system to parking garage fees. Only those who demand getting close to the slopes will have to pay for it.

But raising fees is just one tiny solution for the much bigger and harder to solve problem of Vail's parking shortage. The town and Vail Resorts need to find other ways to encourage skiers and snowboarders to use local bus systems. One idea is to formalize the park-and-ride concept. During Minturn's summer farmers market, drivers are directed to park in the Meadow Mountain parking lot outside of town and ride an ECO Transit bus into Minturn.

No doubt, solving Vail's parking issues will take money — and a lot of it. Perhaps even more difficult than raising funds will be changing the way Vail's customers get to the mountain.

Frontage road parking and fee hikes may help, but in the long term, a more comprehensive solution will need to be put in place.