



Vail Daily

Vail looks to hike parking fees

Increases, in part, seek to cover costs of foreign workers' visa problems

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VAIL, Colorado — Vail would jack up its daily parking prices anywhere from 25 percent to 100 percent this winter under a recommendation approved Tuesday.

A full day of parking should cost \$25 next winter, said the council members and business people that make up Vail's Parking Task Force. Last year, a full day was \$18 or \$20, depending on whether it was a weekend or holiday.

In moving to raise prices, officials cited the increased costs of running the town's free bus system — which draws funding from parking — because of recruiting problems and gas prices.

Also, official said they wanted to encourage people to carpool and take mass transit. In last year's banner snow year, parking overflowed onto the town's frontage roads 48 times. Some think Vail Resorts' new Epic Pass will worsen the problem, although the ski company says the discount pass won't bring many more parkers.

The recommendations must be approved by the Town Council.

Greg Hall, director of public works for the town, said \$25 for a day of parking is similar to the price to park at major events and attractions in Denver.

"The demand is there," Hall said.

The recruiting problems stem from changes to the H-2B visas program, which the town normally uses to bring about 30 bus drivers and five parking attendants from Australia and New Zealand. The town will get no H-2B visas this year.

In the next few days, Vail Transit officials will road-trip to Yosemite National Park, Yellowstone National Park and Mesa Verde National Park to recruit bus drivers for the winter.

But the town still could end up short staffed. Vail Mountain Vice President of Mountain Operation Brian McCartney, a member of the task force, said the town should make sure it gets enough money from parking to pay for lots of overtime for bus drivers.

The committee also recommended raising short-term, two-and-a-half-hour shopping parking from \$5 to at least \$12.

It also suggested raising "value card" all-day prices from \$7 for nonpeak time or \$14 for peak times to \$10 or \$20. They also moved to eliminate "value card" discounts for downvalley residents.

"I don't see us getting any benefit from anyone downvalley," said task force member Rob De Luca of Currents Fine Jewelers.

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