



Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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Sent by Email: info@seatoskygondola.com

1 June 2012

Attention: David Greenfield

Re: Clarifications on Sea to Sky Gondola Proposal

Dear Mr. Greenfield,

Thank you for your letter 23 April 2012. We apologize for the delay in replying to this letter but this proposal has generated much debate in our Recreation and Conservation Committee and our Trails Committee.

Our organization, the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC (FMCBC), is a province-wide umbrella organization of 25 outdoor recreation clubs with over 3500 individual members. For four decades we have represented the interests of non-motorized or self-propelled backcountry recreationists by maintaining or improving backcountry and wilderness experiences for our members and the public. We strongly support maintaining the ecological integrity and boundaries of our provincial parks while maintaining and improving access for non-motorized backcountry recreation.

Your company should be congratulated for its efforts to inform and engage potential user groups of this popular area, but this is no substitute for following the correct procedures for establishing a commercial development of this nature within a provincial park. This is not an "average front country park", but it is a park with the internationally known and spectacular landmark of the Stawamus Chief as its main attraction, and while the gondola does not ascend the Chief itself it is very close to it and is within the Stawamus Chief Provincial Park boundary.

One aspect of your project in which there was strong agreement in the committees was the manner in which this proposal has progressed to this stage where it seems likely that it will be tentatively approved by the Government. We have been advised that this tentative approval was obtained without following the legislated procedure to obtain an approval for an adjustment of a provincial park boundary. As your letter states, the gondola will pass over a portion of the Stawamus Chief Park and this boundary adjustment is necessary to provide a right of way for seven towers and the gondola alignment.



Your letter states that BC Parks considers boundary line adjustments every year, and that these are granted where benefits are high and impacts can be mitigated or prevented. It may be the case that some of these other boundary adjustments were made without following the correct procedures, but that is no reason to continue this improper practice. We understand that your corporation arranged for public meetings to outline your proposal at Brackendale and Squamish, but to date BC Parks has not arranged any public meetings or consultations with the groups who participated in the original park planning process, and this is contrary to proper procedures for boundary adjustments. Furthermore, neither details of this proposal or public comments were posted on the BC Parks website, resulting in limited public exposure of this proposal. In our opinion, BC Parks should promptly conduct proper public meetings relating to this site and possible alternative sites for this project so as to mitigate or eliminate the impact, and at least one of these meetings should be in the Metro Vancouver area at a date and time that is convenient for normal working people to attend.

Your letter indicates that there are many benefits for public recreation resulting from this proposal, assuming it is approved and completed. Our members agree that many of the trails, signage and other infrastructure of both Stawamus Chief and Shannon Falls Provincial Parks have been neglected and require some considerable repair, and providing additional outhouses and signage would clearly enhance the public's experience of these parks. We were disappointed that your maps do not appear to show all the network of trails you propose and feel this should be remedied promptly. Please note that our members have been accessing the back country of this area for decades, and we do not want any restriction of public access along the existing rough road leading towards the proposed upper terminal of the gondola, even when the gondola is not operating as we assume this will be a seasonal operation. This road still provides some access to the area around Goat Ridge, Mount Habrich, etc. and there are many instances in our parks where commercial developments have been used to restrict historic and free public access to the back country. In addition, your letter states that you will provide free car parking, and of course the parking to access the park is presently free. Clearly, there is a limit to the size of the parking lot, and we are concerned that non-paying back country travelers might be restricted from using this parking lot to access the back country if your lot is at risk of becoming full which could limit parking for your paying clients. Our members are well aware of current attempts by commercial operators to restrict public parking in parking lots associated with provincial parks. We have also seen how original conditions associated with a project are often ignored when a project is transferred to another owner, and it is essential that this does not happen with this project.

As noted above, we feel that BC Parks and your company should arrange for a public meeting in the Metro Vancouver area at an appropriate time and place and provide detailed maps showing infrastructure at the upper and lower stations, particularly detailing tourist infrastructure, including parking at the base area and the proposed new trail network and how it connects to existing hiking trails. If your proposal is successful then the use of existing trails may be multiplied many times over and upgrading these would be in everyone's interest.



To ensure that the public obtains the proposed benefits stated in your letter and the concerns detailed above are addressed, any contract between BC Parks and the proponent should include at least the following provisions:

- 1) The proponent agrees to maintain all the infrastructure and park facilities, both new and existing, listed in their letter of 23 April 2012 for at least the expected term or life of this gondola.
- 2) The proponent agrees to maintain unrestricted and free public access to the back country surrounding this proposal, and not to restrict parking for non-paying backcountry travelers.
- 3) The proponent agrees that should this project be transferred or sold to a new owner, the new owner agrees to the conditions expressed above, plus all other conditions of the original agreement.

We look forward to your reply relating to our comments above.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Wood.
Co-Chair, Recreation and Conservation Committee,
Past President,
Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

cc. Brandin Schulze, BC Parks