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Ministry of Natural Resource Operations  
Resort Development Branch  
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Dear Tori Meeks,

**Re: Whistler Blackcomb Updated Resort Master Plans**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Whistler and Blackcomb Resort Master Plans. This letter contains my comments.

First by way of background, I am an avid skier, both in the backcountry and on lifts. I have skied Whistler Blackcomb (WB) frequently every year since 1972 and have had either season passes or Edge Cards for many years. I have done the Spearhead Traverse several times along with numerous other backcountry ski trips. I hike and climb mountains in the summer.

I have three serious concerns and two additional comments regarding the WB Master Plans. My concerns, in descending order of priority, are:

1. **Lifts on Flute.** The proposed lift(s) to the summit or shoulder of Flute is a very bad idea. The lift(s) would transport large numbers of skiers right to the edge of Garibaldi Park above Melody Bowl. There are three separate but related issues:
  - a) These lifts will invariably result in continuing the process of deleting portions of the park and giving it to WB for ski area development. This has happened more than once in the past and will happen again if there are lifts on Flute. The next or another future update to the WB Master Plan will include lifts in Melody Bowl to the summit of Oboe. The march of lifts towards Singing Pass will continue.
  - b) Search and rescue costs and volunteer effort will certainly increase dramatically in the short term at least. There is no way that skiers will be prevented from skiing into Melody Bowl from the Flute summit or shoulder. Uninformed/unprepared skiers going into Melody Bowl will get into trouble since the only reasonable exit (other than hiking back up) is to ski out the narrow hiking trail all the way to the village. That trail is easily missed which means that many skiers will end up at the bottom of the valley and in big trouble. WB should be charged for all search and rescue costs, including volunteer time, if the proposed lift(s) are built since it will be WB that will have caused the problem.
  - c) There are also obvious avalanche hazard issues since Melody Bowl is uncontrolled.

WB's response to (b) and (c) will be that they should be allowed to control Melody Bowl for avalanches and that an exit run should be built out of Melody Bowl. They will propose these actions in the interest of skier safety. That of course will lead to (a).

This is exactly what happened with the Blackcomb Glacier. IntraWest first built a t-bar right to the edge of the park. A few years later they said that a simple road should be built to allow skiers to easily access Blackcomb Glacier and that Blackcomb Glacier should be controlled for avalanches. This was for safety reasons. Now WB is proposing lifts in the area.

The same thing will certainly happen with Melody Bowl. Lifts to the edge of the park on Flute will inevitably result in lifts in Melody Bowl. No amount of assurances now from WB will prevent that from happening in the future. Singing Pass will be next. These are important areas of Garibaldi Park and should not be compromised with lifts or deletions from the park. The only way to prevent that is to keep the proposed Flute lift(s) from ever being built.

2. **Access to Singing Pass and Blackcomb trails.** The WB Master Plans mention that almost all summer hikers access Singing Pass by taking the lifts up Whistler. This is true since the seven km road from the village to the Singing Pass trailhead was decommissioned years ago. It is not feasible to rebuild/repair that road. There is however a new road along the valley bottom presumably to service the hydro power plant.

The WB Master Plan should include, as high priority:

- Public access to the road during the summer.
- A public parking area at or near the end of the road. This could be well away from the power plant if that is a concern.
- A simple foot bridge and short connector trail to join with the Singing Pass trail.

The road and parking area would be the new trailhead for the Singing Pass trail. It could also be the trailhead for a completely new trail accessing the Spearhead on the Blackcomb side. The two trails could eventually connect to form a loop trail around the Spearhead with a common trailhead and parking area. Hikers could access the Spearhead from either side without having to hike up the ski runs or ride the lifts. Or they could choose take the lifts to access the Spearhead loop trail from above. Currently they have no real choice; they have to take the lifts or face a long walk on a boring road or up ski runs.

WB may state that the road and area is not in their jurisdiction and therefore cannot undertake these actions. The first part may be true; it is unclear to me who has direct responsibility for the road and surrounding area. However, even if WB does not directly control the area, it certainly has a strong influence over whoever does. WB could easily make this new trailhead happen if it wants to.

As a good corporate citizen, WB should make this happen. The costs will be modest and there will be significant benefits to the hiking community. WB will also benefit at least indirectly.

3. **Blackcomb Glacier and Ruby Bowl Lifts.** There are at least two reasons for not building the proposed lifts in Blackcomb Glacier and Spanky's Ladder areas:
- It compromises Blackcomb Glacier Park. This area was originally in Garibaldi Park. It was removed from Garibaldi when Blackcomb expanded its operations into the area. That diminished park values. Adding lifts will further diminish park values.
  - As an avid downhill skier, a key reason that I enjoy skiing the Blackcomb Glacier and the Spanky's Ladder bowls is that there are no lifts and some effort is required to access the areas. Lifts in those areas will certainly make skiing on Blackcomb less appealing to me and I suspect many others.

If there are to be lifts in Blackcomb Glacier and/or Spanky's then the Blackcomb Glacier Park should be eliminated completely. Stop pretending that this is a park.

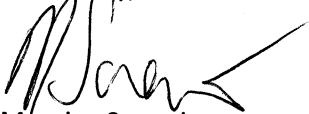
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My two other comments regarding the WB Resort Plans are:

1. **Showcase Gondola.** I can certainly appreciate the challenges that WB has in maintaining the existing t-bars. It is hard to imagine however how the proposed gondola and associated tunnel would be an appropriate replacement. The gondola will be expensive to build and run. It may not be used as much as expected since skiers generally don't like having to remove their skis to ride a lift, especially a short one. Also, that area is subject to high winds and bad weather. How often will the gondola actually be able to operate? I suggest continuing to use the current t-bars or install new ones.
2. **Mountain Lodges.** I have no objection to the proposed small mountain lodges with overnight accommodation on Whistler and Blackcomb. This is of course on the assumption that the lodges are built within the ski areas as described in the Master Plans.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed Master Plans and hope that these comments will be taken into account in any approval process. I am most concerned about the Flute lifts and valley trailhead parking.

Yours truly,



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