

Alta Ski Area Roadside Parking Replacement December 2022

Background

Alta Ski Area (Alta) is located in the Town of Alta at the end of Little Cottonwood Canyon in the Uinta Wasatch Cache National Forest. Alta has a Special Use Permit to provide lift-served skiing and its associated amenities on Forest Service lands. Alta uses USFS lands under its special use permit and its private lands to provide lift-served skiing, snowcat skiing, and human-powered recreation, primarily backcountry skiing for outdoor enthusiasts. Parking for visitors to Alta occurs in parking lots developed and maintained by Alta Ski Area on USFS lands, private lands (Town of Alta & the Alta Lodge), and roadside parking on USFS lands within the Town of Alta located within the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) right-of-way.

Historically, during peak periods, all available parking spaces within the Town of Alta, including the roadside parking between the Alta Lodge and the bypass road, have been needed and used to accommodate visitors, employees, and residents. As many as ninety-two cars have been parked between the Alta Lodge and the bypass road in the past (see Exhibit 2). Prior to the 21-22 ski season, roadside parking has, on extremely busy days, also extended down the bypass road and or the mainline.

During the 20-21 ski season, we had over thirty days the number of vehicles coming to Alta, filled all the available parking areas, and the roadside parking extended down the bypass road. This created significant traffic congestion, public safety, and snow removal issues. On fifteen of those days, vehicles were turned away for hours as more vehicles came than available parking.

To reduce the traffic congestion, public safety, and snow removal issues encountered during peak periods and to manage the number of vehicles coming to Alta, Alta implemented a paid parking reservation system for peak periods at the beginning of the 21-22 ski season. The reservation system changed the morning traffic pattern, reduced the number of vehicles, and improved the visitor experience in Little Cottonwood Canyon. A result of the reservation system was that during the 21-22 ski season, there were no days when more vehicles came to Alta than available parking spaces, and roadside parking never spilled down the bypass road.

Purpose & Need

While Alta's parking reservation system is managing the number of vehicles coming to Alta during peak periods, public safety concerns and snow removal issues still exist for the roadside parking between the Deep Powder House and the Alta bypass road. Vehicles parked on the roadside in this area create the following safety hazards/issues:

- To enter or exit a vehicle parked along the roadside in this area, the driver must open the vehicle's door over the white line into the lane of traffic, as well as exit/enter the vehicle into/from the lane of traffic.
- The occupants of vehicles parked along the roadside in this area must walk in the lane of traffic to/from their vehicle to/from their destination, often impeding the flow of traffic and risking being hit by vehicles using the road. These occupants often are wearing ski boots and carrying ski equipment.
- To access the ski area from the roadside parking in this area, occupants of vehicles parked along the roadside in this area must walk down the Wildcat entry ramp, usually in ski boots and carrying skis. They risk injury from slips and falls when the road is slick and being struck by vehicles walking down or up the ramp.
- Vehicles parked along the roadside parking in this area impede the ability of UDOT to remove snow from the road during the day. When vehicles are not parked in this area, the snow can be pushed over the edge of the road to keep the roadway clear. UDOT will often suspend snow removal operations in the Town of Alta during midday storms when roadside parking exists in this area since it can't effectively remove the snow in this area and the risk of hitting a vehicle or people on the road is high.
- Vehicles parked in this roadside parking are frequently illegally parked over the white line into the lane of traffic, which can impede the flow of traffic and increases the risk of accidents. At times this occurs because the white line can't be seen because the road is snow packed. At other times enough snow has not been pushed off the shoulder to allow enough room for the vehicle park on the roadside and not be across the white line.

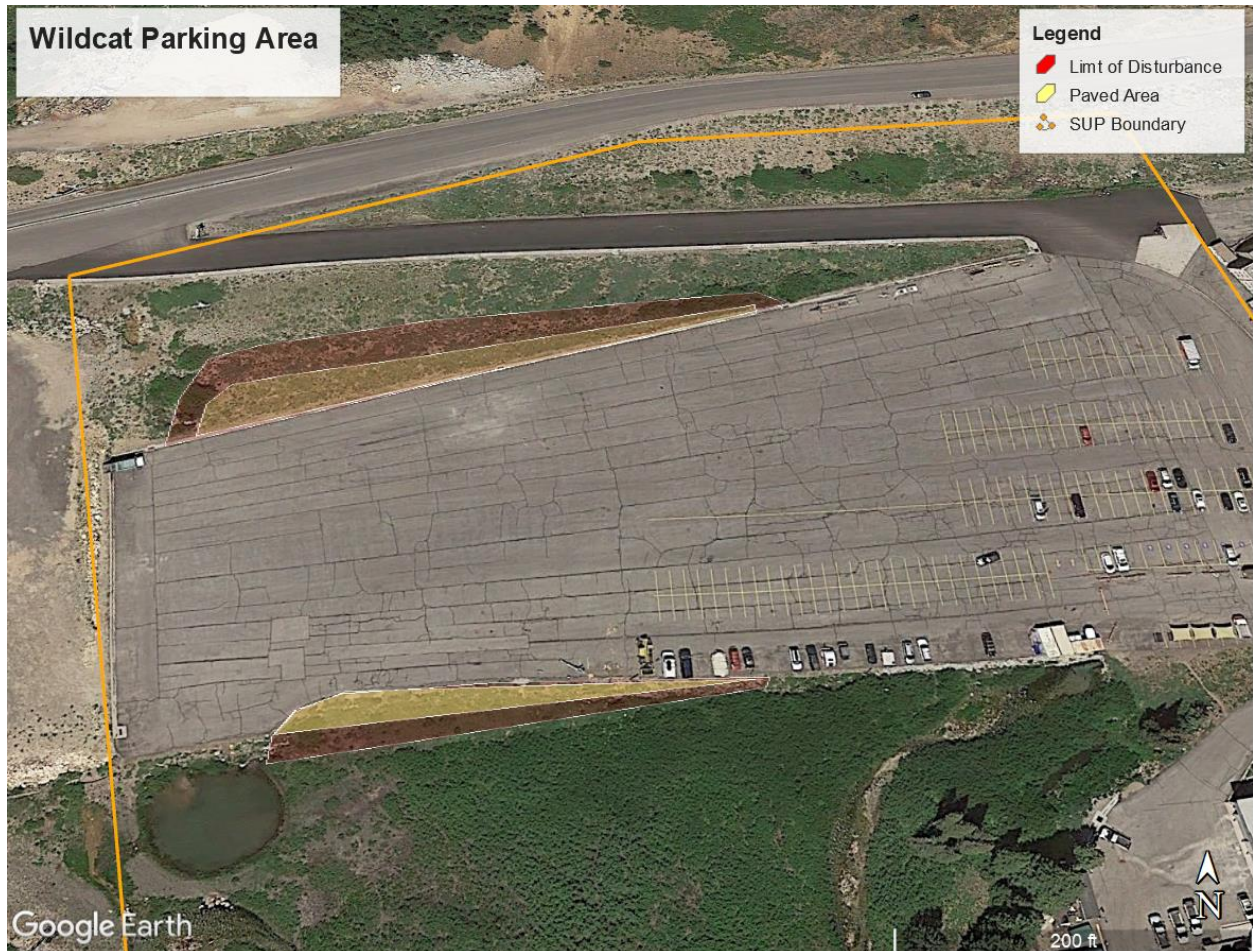
The tapered shape of the Wildcat parking lot results in less efficient parking than could be obtained if the parking lot was more rectangular in shape.

Proposed Action (Project Description)

Alta Ski Area proposes to replace the roadside parking (92 parking spaces) along State Road 210 between the Alta bypass road and the Deep Powder House by squaring up the Wildcat Parking Lot. The roadside parking would be replaced with parking spaces in the Wildcat Parking Lot that do not impede the traffic impede on State Road 210 and eliminate the risk of vehicles or people being hit by traffic on State Road 210.

The Wildcat Parking Area is currently an irregular quadrilateral. The width of the East end of the parking area is approximately 320 feet and the West part of the lot narrows to approximately 210 feet. Alta proposes to square up this parking area through a cut on the North side of the parking area and some fill on South side of the area. This would allow the parking area to be tapered to approximately 275 rather than 210 feet. Approximately .30 acres would be added to the Wildcat Parking area and the limit of disturbance for this improvement would not exceed .65 acres. Approximately 90 parking spaces would be added by this improvement.

Exhibit 1



Timing

Alta Ski Area would like to complete these improvements during the summer of 2023.

Project Information

Project Title: Parking Improvements

Project Manager: Tom Giaradina

Applicant: Alta Ski Area

General Location: Alta Ski Area, Wildcat Parking Lot

Elevation: 8,685 feet

Amount of new disturbance: .65 acres

Amount of previous disturbed area: 0 acres

Amount of total disturbance: .65 acres

Duration of Project: Summer of 2023

Exhibit 2

