

Swan View Coalition Responds to Pursuit's Proposed Glacier View Tram

For Immediate Release 10/1/26

Contact Keith Hammer, SVC Chair, 406-253-6536 or keith@swanview.org

This morning, Pursuit Attractions and Hospitality issued a press release from Denver, Colorado, seeking a Special Use Permit from the Flathead National Forest to construct and operate a sightseeing aerial tramway on public lands on the north slopes of Columbia Mountain – the northernmost mountain in the Swan Range adjacent to Hungry Horse, Montana. Swan View Coalition responds as follows:

“This proposal should be summarily rejected by the Forest Service, as it was in 2023 after several years of deliberation,” said Swan View Coalition Chair Keith Hammer. “This tramway would further fragment wildlife habitat and their north-south travel, which is already fragmented by Highway 2, a railroad, and high human use of the Flathead River corridor. It will also destroy the views of that mountainside and river corridor.”

Hammer cited several Forest Service documents obtained using the Freedom of Information Act in 2023. The former proposal by Pursuit was rejected because it does not comply with the Flathead Forest Plan's intent for recreation in that roadless area to be “semi-primitive non-motorized.” Nor had the proposal been demonstrated to “be in the public interest,” noting that a similar experience is already offered at the nearby Whitefish Mountain Resort. (See attached pdf).

According to Pursuit's Glacier View Tram website, the only difference between the current proposal and the prior proposal is that Pursuit would now operate the tram and its base and ridgeline visitor facilities year-round instead of just seasonally. (<https://www.glacierviewtram.com/>).

“This is a rich-get-richer scheme and the greed is already apparent,” Hammer said. “What will come next, more trails to connect with other trails, downhill mountain bike trails, maybe a downhill ski run or two? Once these rich guys get started, they'll be wanting more from public taxpayers and public lands in order to increase their profits – just as has happened with the Holland Lake Lodge Special Use Permit with the public paying to enlarge the private lodge's sewer system.”

“I hope the Forest Service and Pursuit hear loud and clear from the public that people are fed up with seeing the Montana they love destroyed by big corporations wanting to cash in on public lands,” Hammer concluded.

- END -

Swan View Coalition is a non-profit founded in 1984 to protect the visual quality of the Swan Range and to ensure public lands continue to provide quality, quiet habitats for fish, wildlife and people. (<https://www.swanview.org/>)

From: [Prew, Chris- FS](#)
To: [Steele, Kurtis - FS](#); [Alexander, Joseph -FS](#)
Subject: RE: Glacier View Tram
Date: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 2:17:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

Its MA 6a right there in Hungry Horse and MA 5b up on Columbia Mountain. For Grizzly Bears, its in the PCA. As Kurt said, The S. Fk, of the Flathead below HH Dam is not in WSR Corridor.



Chris Prew
Recreation, Wilderness, WSR, Trails & Rec Special Uses Program Manager

Forest Service
Flathead National Forest

p: 406-370-9387
christopher.prew@usda.gov

650 Wolfpack Way
Kalispell, MT 59901
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead/>

Caring for the land and serving people

From: Steele, Kurtis - FS <Kurtis.Steele@usda.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 2:06 PM
To: Alexander, Joseph -FS <joseph.alexander@usda.gov>
Cc: Prew, Chris- FS <Christopher.Prew@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Glacier View Tram

Forest Plan semi-primitive and I think non-motorized. It would likely need a forest plan amendment was MJ's initial look. It's in roadless though and I think that would be a larger hurdle. River is **not** classified as W&S. My guess is this would be in Grizzly bear core as that is often what our roadless areas land in. I'm not sure if it is in the DCA or PCA.



Kurt Steele
Forest Supervisor
Forest Service
Flathead National Forest

p: 406-758-5250
c: 406-253-4819
kurt.steele@usda.gov

650 Wolfpack way
Kalispell, MT 59901
www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Alexander, Joseph -FS <joseph.alexander@usda.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 1:41 PM
To: Steele, Kurtis - FS <Kurtis.Steele@usda.gov>
Cc: Prew, Chris- FS <Christopher.Prew@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Glacier View Tram

Couple of quick questions for you. Do you know what your Forest Plan MA is in that area. What is the designation of the river it crosses and if it is in critical habitat for grizzly bears?



Joe Alexander
Director RMLHW

Forest Service
Northern Region

p: 406-329-3584

c: 406-370-6392

joseph.alexander@usda.gov

26 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804

www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Steele, Kurtis - FS <Kurtis.Steele@usda.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 1:06 PM

To: Alexander, Joseph -FS <joseph.alexander@usda.gov>

Subject: FW: Glacier View Tram

This was what was presented a few years back as very preliminary. They have done some work since then with better graphics.



Kurt Steele
Forest Supervisor

Forest Service
Flathead National Forest

p: 406-758-5250

c: 406-253-4819

kurt.steele@usda.gov

650 Wolfpack way
Kalispell, MT 59901

www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Crandall, Michael -FS <michael.crandall@usda.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2019 4:43 PM

To: Davies, Robert -FS <robert.davies@usda.gov>; Prew, Chris- FS <Christopher.Prew@usda.gov>;

Butterfield, Anthony -FS <anthony.butterfield@usda.gov>; Pence, Colter -FS

<colter.pence@usda.gov>

Subject: FW: Glacier View Tram

Hello all,

I wanted to follow up regarding Ono M. and Pursuit's informal proposal for a special use involving a tram from Hungry Horse to a point on the east side of Columbia Mountain (see attached "prefeasibility study").

In my estimation, this proposal does not pass initial screening for new special uses as it is "not consistent or can be made consistent" with the forest plan. As such, the proposal should be rejected. The forest plan clearly states that special uses are to be compatible with the recreation opportunity

settings where the use is located.

FW-DC-REC 16 New and existing special-use permits serve the public interest, meet national standards, and complement the recreation settings and opportunities. Recreation special uses are used as a tool to provide desired recreation opportunities and are compatible with the recreation opportunity spectrum setting(s) in which they are permitted. (pg 59)

The summer ROS setting for where the top terminal is proposed is “semiprimitive nonmotorized” which is described in the forest plans as:

FW-DC-SREC03 Summer semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation opportunity spectrum settings provide opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance. Rustic structures such as signs and footbridges are occasionally present to direct use and/or protect the setting’s natural and cultural resources. These rustic constructed features are built from native materials or those that mimic native materials. Closed roads may be present but do not detract from the semiprimitive nonmotorized experience of visitors..(pg. 56)

The level of development proposed would clearly be inconsistent with this setting. Trams are more suitable in “rural” ROS settings such as at Big Mountain. In addition, WMR currently provides a similar experience to the one proposed.

Let me know if you have any questions or have a perspective that you think I may have missed.



M.J. Crandall
District Recreation Lead

Forest Service
Flathead National Forest, Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District

p: 406-387-3818
f: 406-387-3889
mjcrandall@fs.fed.us

P.O. Box 190340
10 Hungry Horse Drive
Hungry Horse, MT 59919
www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Crandall, Michael J -FS

Sent: Thursday, February 7, 2019 2:34 PM

To: Prew, Chris -FS <chrisprew@fs.fed.us>

Subject: Glacier View Tram



M.J. Crandall
District Recreation Lead

Forest Service
Flathead National Forest, Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District

p: 406-387-3818
f: 406-387-3889
mjcrandall@fs.fed.us

P.O. Box 190340
10 Hungry Horse Drive
Hungry Horse, MT 59919
www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: [Puchlerz, Molly -FS](#)
To: [Ward, Jeffrey -FS](#)
Cc: [Smith, Brandon -FS](#); [Wehunt, Sadie -FS, KALISPELL, MT](#); [Alexander, Joseph -FS](#); [Wellner, Kent -FS](#); [Sweeney, Kevin -FS](#)
Subject: FW: Response letter Glacier View Tram
Date: Friday, January 6, 2023 12:45:12 PM
Attachments: [Response Letter.pdf](#)
[image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

FYI, Kurt rejected the Glacier View Tram proposal.

Molly



Molly Puchlerz
Acting RHEALMIS Staff
Forest Service
Flathead National Forest

c: 406-802-0528
molly.puchlerz@usda.gov

650 Wolfpack Way
Kalispell, MT 59901

www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

From: Steele, Kurtis - FS <Kurtis.Steele@usda.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, January 4, 2023 1:30 PM
To: Rodgers, Gary <(b) (6)>
Cc: Piquette, Mark <(b) (6)>; Puchlerz, Molly -FS <molly.puchlerz@usda.gov>; Mackenzie, Tamara -FS, KALISPELL, MT <tamara.mackenzie@usda.gov>; Davies, Robert -FS <robert.davies@usda.gov>
Subject: Response letter

Good afternoon Gary,
Please see attached my response to your proposal. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns. Also, the formal letter through certified mail will be mailed out as soon as possible, but I wanted to get this to you as soon as possible, hints the email. I appreciate the professionalism and the relationship we have shared to date.

Sincerely,

Kurt Steele
Forest Supervisor
Forest Service



Flathead National Forest

p: 406-758-5250

c: 406-253-4819

kurt.steele@usda.gov

650 Wolfpack way
Kalispell, MT 59901

www.fs.fed.us



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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Flathead
National
Forest

650 Wolfpack Way
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 758-5200
Fax (406) 758-5367

File Code: 2720

Date: January 4, 2023

Gary Rodgers
COO of Pacific Northwest Pursuit Collection
74 Railroad St E
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Electronically sent: (b) (6)

RE: Pursuit Tram Proposal on the Flathead National Forest

CERTIFIED MAIL – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Dear Mr. Rodgers:

I am responding to the enclosed letter dated June 15, 2022, in which you propose to install and manage an aerial scenic tramway with associated amenities on Columbia Mountain on National Forest System land located on the Hungry Horse Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest.

I have reviewed your proposal and determined it fails to meet the Forest Service regulation and policy described below for accepting proposals.

Federal regulation (36 CFR 251.54(e)) requires that special use proposals must pass all nine initial and five second level screening criteria. I have determined your proposal does not meet the initial and secondary screening criteria, which I have elaborated further below.

Initial screening criteria:

Initial screening criteria 2. The proposal is inconsistent, and cannot be made consistent, with applicable forest land and resource management plan standards and guidelines for management of the area.

The proposed use and location of the Glacier View Tram is currently inconsistent with the 2018 Flathead National Forest Land Management Plan (Forest Plan). The upper tram terminal and associated facilities are located in Management Area 5b-Backcountry motorized year-round with a mapped ROS (recreation opportunity spectrum) of semi-primitive non-motorized. This proposal is inconsistent with how semi-primitive areas are managed.

There was extensive public collaboration with the forest plan revision process which was initiated in 2013 and concluded when the Record of Decision for the Forest Plan was



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signed in 2018. With the Forest Plan being less than five years old, I will honor the commitments made to the public by not proposing an amendment at this time to make this proposal consistent.

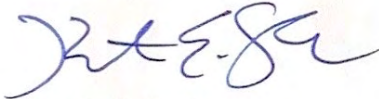
Second-level Screening criteria 2. The proposal would not be in the public interest.

Public sensing has not been conducted to date; therefore, we cannot determine the level of public interest or support for this proposal, so we would be speculating on public interest.

This proposal will not be held for further consideration and is being returned. Rejection of this unsolicited proposal is not subject to administrative appeal under (CFR 251.54, CFR 214.6(c)).

If you have any questions about this process, please contact my staff officer Molly Puchlerz at molly.puchlerz@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K.E. Steele", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kurtis E. Steele
Forest Supervisor

cc: Robert Davies, District Ranger, Hungry Horse-Glacier View RD