

TRAILHEAD SECURITY PROPOSAL

“Breadcrumb Watcher” (Trail Name)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington has some of the best trails in the nation. As wonderful as they are, however, they need to be usable to be enjoyed. Trailhead crime – including vandalism, theft, and “smash and grabs” – is a significant and growing threat to trail usability. This document outlines a proposal to help address this problem, a proposal which would be led, funded, organized, and implemented by the trails community itself, in partnership with applicable land managers and law enforcement.

PROPOSAL

This proposal offers four (4) solutions to address trailhead crime.

- **Increased and Improved Signage:** At affected trailheads, there needs to be signage at trailheads which include ALL of the following types: “Smash and Grab Hotspot” ([example](#)), “Do Not Leave Valuables in Car” ([example](#)), and “Report Smash and Grabs” (no example, but the sign would give instructions on how to report incidents)
- **Volunteer Trailhead Lookouts:** This program would have the following features.
 - The purpose of Trailhead Lookouts is deterrence only. Trailhead Lookouts will not attempt to intervene if they witness a crime; they will simply observe and call 911.
 - It would be done under the auspices of an existing group, such as the [Washington Trails Association](#), [Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance](#), and so forth.
 - The Program would operate on a per-trailhead basis.
 - Volunteers would be vetted, either by the sponsoring group (such as WTA or EMBA) or the land manager (such as King County Parks, WA State Parks, WA DNR, USFS, etc.), who will confirm that the volunteer had successfully completed a criminal background check.
 - For each monitored trailhead, vetted volunteers could sign up to work shifts at the trailhead.
 - Trailhead Lookouts would always work in pairs, never alone.
 - While Trailhead Lookouts are monitoring the trailhead:
 - A “sandwich board” sign ([example](#)) would be placed at the entrance, announcing that the trailhead parking lot is under active monitoring.
 - Volunteers would wear conspicuous clothing which clearly identifies them as a Trailhead Lookout, such as a vest and hat (or WTA hardhat).
 - Volunteers would sit in lawn chairs. Depending on the configuration of the parking lot, this could be at the entrance/exit to the trailhead, entrance/exit to the parking lot, or somewhere else.

- Optionally volunteers would have a GoPro or similar camera running continuously to record everyone and everything which enters or exits the parking lot.

- **Trailhead Video Surveillance:**

- At select trailheads, 4K surveillance cameras would be installed in sufficient quantity and in appropriate locations so as to provide law enforcement with actionable video clips of crimes, where “actionable” means high enough quality to clearly read license plate numbers and clearly identify suspect faces.
 - I am open to the idea of creating a GoFundMe campaign, with an initial donation of \$1-2K, to help fund cameras, if enough money can be raised to make the acquisition of cameras a viable option.
- Someone (TBD) would be responsible for maintaining the cameras, including charging batteries, retrieving memory cards when a crime has occurred, etc.
- Advocate with land managers, law enforcement agencies, and local governments to consider purchasing robust solutions, such as this ([link](#)).

- **Trailhead Crime Statistics:**

- In order to better measure the frequency of trailhead crime, there needs to be a centralized repository for trailhead crime statistics. Based on the author’s personal observation of trailhead smash and grabs in recent weeks, it appears that existing trailhead crime statistics, as available in sites such as CityProtect ([link](#)), are incomplete.
- Once this data repository exists, this data can be mined to adapt security measures to reflect the latest trends in trailhead criminal activity.
- Related: Selective log of known Washington state trailhead crime ([link](#))