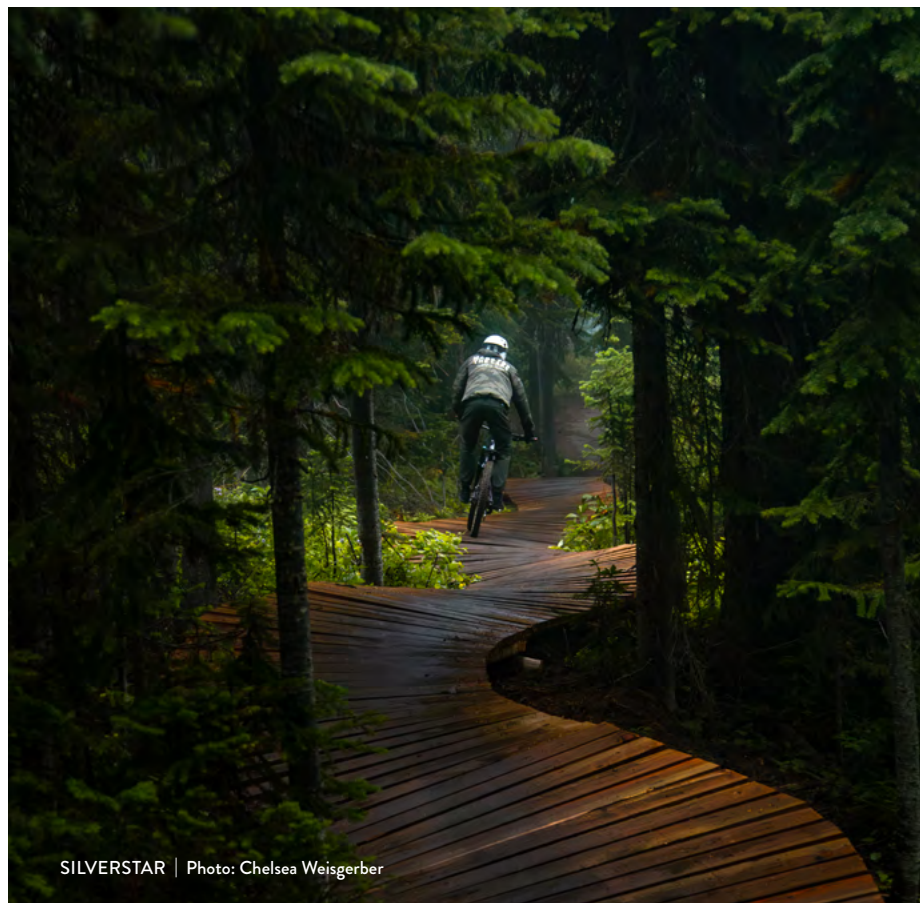


# EXPANDING MOUNTAIN BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE THOMPSON OKANAGAN

As mountain biking continues to grow in popularity in British Columbia, demand has increased for more trails, particularly trails that are accessible to people with diverse abilities.

In 2022-23, the non-profit associations of three Thompson Okanagan resorts—Big White Ski Resort, SilverStar Mountain Resort, and Sun Peaks Resort—each received \$200,000 in funding from the Province of B.C., through the Targeted Regional Tourism Development Initiative. In collaboration with their resorts and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, the associations used the funding to answer demand for more accessible mountain bike infrastructure.



SILVERSTAR | Photo: Chelsea Weisgerber



SUN PEAKS RESORT | Photo: Cristina Gareau

## PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

Since there are limited professionals with expertise in mountain bike trail and infrastructure development, the project took time and effort. Supply chain issues further impacted timelines, as did inclement weather and environmental studies that needed to happen before any work started.

Public engagement was a key element of the project's success. With input requested from local communities, as well as mountain biking associations and groups, engagement required additional time and resources.

Work didn't end when the trail upgrades were completed. Trails and infrastructure require ongoing maintenance and development as interest grows and biking expectations expand and shift over time.





## PROJECT APPROACH

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association understood that investing in mountain biking would attract visitors to the region in spring, summer, and fall. With Big White Ski Resort, SilverStar Mountain Resort, and Sun Peaks Resort onboard, the goal was to attract more mountain bikers and encourage cross-resort visits in the summer.

Each resort had already invested substantial amounts of funding towards mountain biking trail and infrastructure development. With the funding, the resorts were able to increase their efforts and contribute to a larger plan to boost visitation throughout the region.

Each resort had already established trust and credibility with local communities and mountain biking groups and associations. They also had experience in the environmental review process, permitting, and engaging with other key groups and partners.

## PROJECT RESULTS

Big White Ski Resort used funding to build a progression zone that helps mountain bikers sharpen their skills, along with developing a dual slalom course and redeveloping the Lightning Strike trail. They reworked existing trails to make them more accessible to riders, and installed a sprinkler system to adapt to climate change impacts.

SilverStar Mountain Resort built out several new trails, developed a community asset with a pump track, and completed an event space. Since then, visitation has grown, and the resort now hosts the [Crankworx Summer Series](#) that brings over 3,000 spectators to their new slopestyle and pump track venue.

Sun Peaks Resort created a machine-built trail on Sundance Mountain, as well as a signature jump trail that has increased visitation and economic development. Sun Peaks has experienced strong growth to its mountain bike business, including 34 percent growth in mountain bike visits from summer 2021 to summer 2022. In summer 2023, the resort experienced a further increase of 13 percent in lift access use.

In addition to providing value to each organization, the project has successfully attracted more mountain bikers to the area, facilitated crossover tourism visits between resorts, and helped to boost the local economy.



BIG WHITE | Photo: Big White Ski Resort

