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Comments: The Sandia Peak Ski area Mountain Coaster project brings good opportunities for passive outdoor recreation to the ski area, but may bring more harm than good. The environmental impact of a permanent structure, and the building of such can be a large impact on the flora and fauna of the forest, as well as the use of existing trails/runs. In my opinion, the resources being allocated toward this project would be better off used for forest management and cleanup in the Sandia Peak Ski Area.

There are many felled and dead trees that litter the forest between the ski runs, and some of them look like they are just one big windstorm away from falling dangerously into recreational areas, and possibly damaging lifts and other existing infrastructure (not to mention the mountain coaster if it does get built on the proposed site).

I also believe that a mountain coaster is not the best use of funding for recreation during the warmer months. I believe that a more sustainable project would be to create a lift-accessed trail system for mountain bikers to use and enjoy. There are many mountain bike parks in the US that take over the slopes of ski areas in the summer months. In our climate, a mountain bike park would feasibly be open for nearly 8 months of the year in a dry year. The park would take plenty of work to plan and construct, but would offer many opportunities for work throughout the building and planning phase, as well as persisting jobs that would stem from maintaining trails and running lifts, and spanning the spectrum of rentals and food vending during mountain bike season.

The mountain coaster seems like a great idea at first, but when put into perspective, the coaster would be hard-pressed to bring many return trips to the mountain, especially after a day of enjoying it. In contrast, a mountain bike park would bring return trips constantly to the mountain. Season passes could be sold to generate large chunks of maintenance funding, and draw in locals every weekend or possibly even more frequently.

Another thing that separates the mountain coaster project from a possible Mountain Bike Park is the possibility of getting volunteers to work on the project. Trail work is performed by mainly volunteers on most trail systems across the US, and while it isn't necessarily true for lift-accessed mountain bike trails, this could be an opportunity to invite local riders to work on the trails and assist with the manual labor in exchange for discounted lift access during the riding season.

While the mountain coaster is an interesting proposal for a new passive activity on the Sandia Peak, I believe that cleaning up the mountain should be a bigger priority. I also think a better use of the funds, and a better return on investment is to rely on the current infrastructure such as lifts and lodge buildings to run the ski area as a mountain bike park in the warmer months, relying on our local mountain bike enthusiasts and recreational mountain bikers to make frequent visits to the park.