

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/29/2021 7:20:24 PM

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Comments: I strongly oppose the construction of the Sandia Peak Ski Area Mountain Coaster. The stated purpose of the coaster is to bring more visitors interested in a range of recreation opportunities to the green side of the Sandia Mountains. However, there is a risk that rising numbers of these new visitors will cause the number of visitors interested in active forms of mountain recreations to decrease, which could lead to a loss in the overall numbers of those engaging in any type of recreation activities in the Sandia Mountains. Many of the dedicated outdoorsmen who frequent the Crest and the hiking trails below it value their time on the mountain because it provides an escape from the crowds and commercial environment of city life. They will be much less interested in frequenting the trails on the mountain if doing so means biking or hiking under the intrusive whoops of thrill-seekers zooming mindlessly down the mountain, for both the sight and the sounds of the Mountain Coaster will certainly detract from the mountain's greatest asset: its natural, serene beauty. Furthermore, many of the visitors interested exclusively in the mountain coaster are more likely than those with a broad range of interests to use the tram to access Sandia Peak. If the new visitors, most of whom will be leaving from Albuquerque, do not drive through the East Mountains to reach Sandia Peak, the businesses that had hoped to benefit from the increase in travelers will see no change in traffic, and may even lose regular customers who have been turned off by the theme-park-like atmosphere of the Crest. Recreational visitors interested in hiking and other active recreation, on the other hand, habitually drive to the top of the mountain because they appreciate the natural, undisturbed beauty of the drive up the Sandia Crest Scenic Byway and, moreover, value stopping along the way to complete hikes, for example.

My second and equally important point is that the Mountain Coaster's intrusion into the natural environment of the wildlife of the Sandia Mountains will be detrimental to not only the outdoorsmen who value that beauty and the businesses which rely on the revenue generated by those visitors, but also to the the native flora and fauna which call this wild area their home. The ecosystem of the Sandia Mountains is already bereaved enough due to ever-worsening drought and invasive species, for example, and should not to have to suffer the harm and insult of a Mountain Coaster intruding into the habitat as well. And those of us who care fondly for the nature world should not have to endure its destruction for a project that provides absolutely no benefit to our community, either.

My second and equally important point is that the presence of a mountain coaster in the Sandia Mountains will be harmful to the native flora and fauna which consider this wild area their home.