

Breckenridge launches new projects to reduce Sunday traffic, drive business

New variable message signs will keep Breckenridge guests informed of road conditions

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SUMMIT DAILY NEWS,

As the season kicks off, Breckenridge is preparing to launch new programs that will not only help visitors avoid the Sunday night Interstate-70 traffic but will offer ideas of things to do while they wait out the congestion.

The town, Breckenridge Ski Area, the I-70 Coalition and a number of local businesses have partnered to provide up-to-date traffic information to guests before they even leave the mountains.

As part of the project, a new variable message sign will be posted at the top of the gondola at Breckenridge with current information on traffic conditions, while another variable message sign to be set up on the north side of town near Coyne Valley Road will keep guests informed of parking availability, traffic and weather conditions as well as upcoming community events.

"We want to make a better guest experience," town of Breckenridge spokeswoman Kim DiLallo said. "We feel the best guest experience is getting those skiers into town to experience downtown and not sitting on I-70."

The cost of the new signs, which are expected to be up and running within the next month, will be split equally between the town and the ski resort. Temporary variable message signs will be put up this year as a pilot project, with permanent signs to be installed in the future.

Traffic updates on the signs will be supplemented by a new partnership between the Goi70.com project and the Breckenridge business community. For the first time this year, businesses will be able to advertise specials and deals using the Goi70 website, which provides information on road conditions and traffic online and through a smart phone application.

"We want to encourage people to stay in town and avoid that horrible rush peak travel time back to Denver," Margaret Bowes, a spokesperson for the I-70 Coalition said. "Local businesses are participating with us and giving us deals and incentives to get people to just stick around town for a couple more hours before they head home and avoid that rush."

The website will also promote Sunday night lodging deals encouraging travelers to stay an extra night, helping to reduce congestion on I-70.

"The variable message signs that Breck's doing and what Goi70's trying to accomplish really go hand in hand," Bowes said. "It's a good partnership."

Goi70.com is a project of the I-70 coalition, formed in 2004 by an intergovernmental agreement to handle transportation issues through the mountain corridor. The Goi70 project could be the source of travel information on the variable message signs in Breckenridge.

Goi70 will also launch a new carpooling information program this year. The site was launched around this time last year and provides travelers information online, on their cell phones and through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, which allow travelers to post their own information and updates on the drive.

The new aspect of promoting business deals is already popular, particularly in Breckenridge. Bowes said recently she has been working with as many as three new businesses per day. Businesses interested in partnering with the I-70 coalition through the Goi70 website can e-mail the coalition at info@i70solutions.org.

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