

A photograph of two mountain bikers riding on a rocky, dirt trail. The biker in the foreground is wearing a black jersey and shorts, and is riding a blue and black bike. The biker in the background is wearing a black jersey and bright blue shorts. The trail is rocky and the background is a blurred natural setting.

**IMBA Ride Center Report**

**STEAMBOAT BIKE TOWN RIDE CENTER**

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO**

**SEPTEMBER 2017**



# Introduction



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# 1. Introduction

## What is an IMBA Ride Center?

The Ride Center™ designation represents IMBA's Model Trail recognition for large-scale mountain bike facilities that offer something for every rider. Bring your full arsenal of bikes to these destination-worthy areas. From backcountry adventures to shuttle-served gravity trails, and from expert-only to family-friendly, you'll encounter the best the sport has to offer. Ride Centers range from renowned Gold Level destinations like Park City and Oakridge to smaller towns that totally revolve around the ride like McCall or Marquette.

IMBA Ride Centers will be designed for every type of mountain biker, provide a positive mountain bike experience with progressive skill building, and include facilities that break down the barriers for entry with bike rentals, quality maps, clear signage, and available instruction or guiding. These model trail systems will broaden the demographic of the mountain bike community by providing a model beginner experience that is family friendly on the same site that will challenge an expert rider. A Ride Center will demonstrate the best practices in mountain bike trail design and construction for grassroots replication.

Ride Centers will also bring major economic benefits to their host communities. IMBA has compiled online resources that describe the ways that mountain biking supports tourism and enhances economic development in communities around the globe.

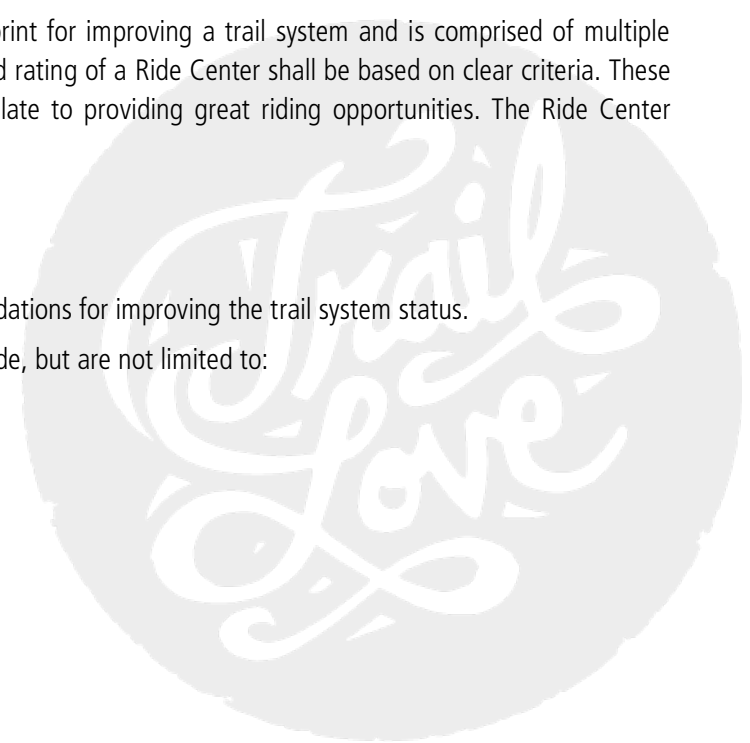
## What is the procedure to become an IMBA Ride Center?

This designation is just as much about the process as the award itself. The application criteria is the blueprint for improving a trail system and is comprised of multiple factors with both trail experience and surrounding community amenities being measured. The designation and rating of a Ride Center shall be based on clear criteria. These criteria do not need to be objective and some will necessarily be subjective. But in all cases, they will relate to providing great riding opportunities. The Ride Center application process consists of:

- A self-evaluation
- An in person professional assessment and review
- A thorough evaluation and report of the existing conditions, opportunities for growth and recommendations for improving the trail system status.

The Evaluation criteria is comprised of key aspects that make an amazing mountain bike destination and include, but are not limited to:

- Services
- Destination Best Practices
- Trail Types
- Trail Mileage
- Quality Trail Experience



## 2. You Are Here

### Overview

Steamboat Springs has been a star on the recreation map for decades. Yet it is only in the last 5 years that the community has truly put itself on the map as a destination for great mountain biking. Steamboat Bike Town initially raised its profile by earning a “Bronze” Ride Center rating and hosting the IMBA World Summit. With the passing of a tax referendum, referred to as “2A”, an influx of funding came available to finance a singletrack transformation. It didn’t take long for trail planning to commence and guide the efforts of the US Forest Service, Routt County Riders, and many other stakeholders. With a host of new trails built and opened, it is time to reassess where Steamboat Bike Town is heading and whether it has earned an upgraded IMBA Ride Center rating.

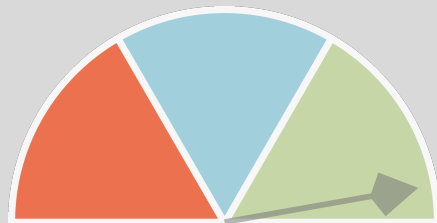
When one seeks to define the theme of riding the trails surrounding Steamboat Springs, words like “demanding” and “diverse” come to mind. For riders visiting from lower elevations, the altitude in Steamboat makes every ride just a bit more involved. With most rides beginning and ending right from town, there’s never a shortage of challenging climbs to get on the mountains and rugged country beyond. It isn’t all climbing, riders who want to focus on adrenaline can head to the very well developed Steamboat Resort Bike Park to find big jumps and limitless descending. Right up the valley and just off of the 7.5 mile long Yampa River Core Trail is the Emerald Mountain trail system. Emerald overlooks downtown Steamboat Springs, which is only a few pedal strokes away. From the Emerald Mountain trailhead, riders will pedal up on efficient routes that really get you up into a surprising profusion of trails. From the top you can look across the valley towards the trail filled backcountry of Buffalo Pass, Fish Creek, and Rabbit Ears. It is in Buffalo Pass that riders will find a singletrack “pot of gold.” Gravity oriented routes such as *Grouse Ridge* and *BTR* are entirely new or have been re-built and updated to create an experience that is rugged, flowing, and mountain biking at its best. *BTR* connects riders to *Flash of Gold*, named after the amazing yellow aspen leaves that overwhelm trail users in autumn. All of these areas bring riders right back to a community full of good food, lively conversations, and passion for trails. Reinforcing the feeling that Steamboat Springs is the nexus for these trails and the perfect place to end a ride.

### Summary of Graphic Overview

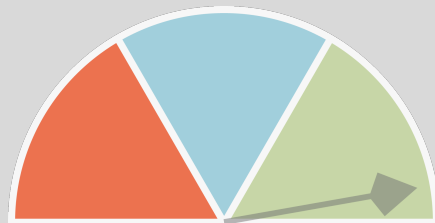
The graphs below represent the four scoring categories that are used in rating a prospective Ride Center’s status. The arrow indicates the score that was calculated by the review team after visiting the destination and sampling the submissions for each criteria category. When the submission was found lacking or inappropriate, reviewers made an effort to locate trails, venues, etc. that would match better. This effort ensures that candidates have the best chance at receiving the score they deserve.



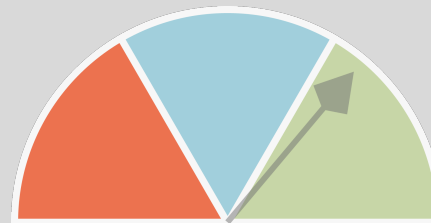
SERVICES



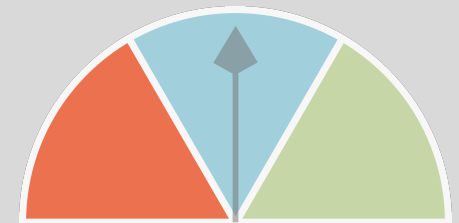
DESTINATION  
BEST PRACTICES



TRAIL TYPES



QUALITY TRAIL  
EXPERIENCE



## 3a. Analysis > Services

### Highlights

- The customer service at Steamboat Ski & Bike Kare is top notch. Their willingness to provide information, mechanical skills, and having the right equipment on hand makes it possible to keep visitors on the trail.
- Clean and comfortable accommodations are readily available. Staff seems ready and able to help riders out with secure bike storage. Hotel type lodging is backed up with quality BnB and longer-term condominium type options as well.
- Restaurants such as the Backdoor Grill, Sunpie's Bistro, and Salt & Lime are perfect locations to end a ride and refuel for the next day's adventures.
- The base area at Steamboat Resort's Bike Park hosts a selection of activities designed to keep the whole family having fun outdoors.
- Convenient air service in Hayden makes Steamboat Springs surprisingly accessible.
- eMTB rental and riding experience at the Resort is a great opportunity for people to try a new sport.

### Challenges

#### Challenge #1 – No Lodging That Caters Specifically To Bicyclists

- The existing accommodations are motivated to help, but there is no truly bike friendly lodging.
- Encourage lodging owners to provide indoor bike storage, a bike wash and service area, and laundry facilities.
- Bikers will feel taken care of, excited to return, and will share their experience with others. **This will also earn an additional point.**



Services	Points Available	Points Earned
Bike Shop - Goods and Services	2	2
MTB Guide Services / Outfitter	1	1
Bike Rental	2	2
Shopping	1	1
Primitive Camping	1	1
Camping with Potable Water and Showers	1	1
Camping with Van/RV hookup	1	1
Hotel / Motel	1	1
Bike-friendly Lodging	1	0
Quality / Variety of Restaurants	2	2
Brew Pub	1	1

Coffee Shop	1	1
Grocery Store	1	1
Natural / Organic Food	1	1
Airport	2	1
Medical Services / EMS	1	1
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>



## 3b. Analysis > Destination Best Practices

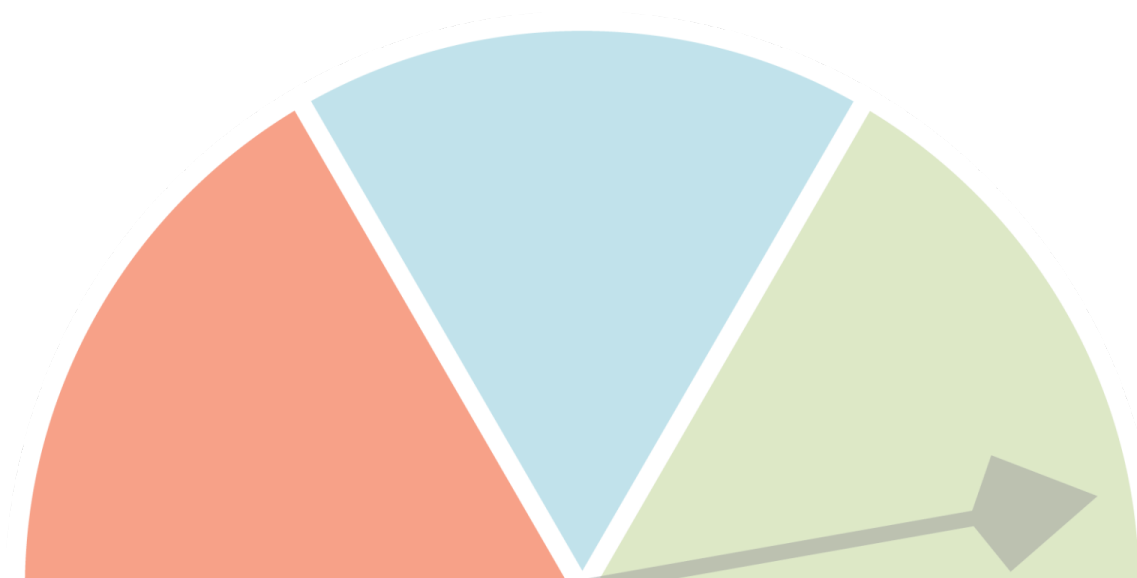
### Highlights

- There is a tremendous variety of recreation opportunities in the area. This variety encourages visitors to stay longer and reinforces why locals love the place they live.
- The community is inundated with trails, giving it a “singletrack city” feel. There seems to be a trail connecting every corner of the community. Riding right from town reduces the need to drive a vehicle to distant trailheads. It also helps reinforce strong values of conservation by providing immediate access to wild areas.
- Navigating on local trails is straight forward to do since they are well marked with signs. Apps such as Trailforks and MTB Project display the local trails comprehensively.
- The Trail Maintenance Endowment Fund is providing an almost unheard of service to the community by providing a permanent endowment to fund the maintenance of local non-motorized trails. Ensuring that the singletrack around Steamboat will just keep getting better and won’t overburden the land managers.
- A culture of trail building expertise has been fostered in this community and is blossoming into very well built trails that deliver high-quality experiences.
- The 2A fund is still financing the construction of new trails for mountain bikers to explore and creating a model for other communities to follow.

### Challenges

#### Challenge #1 – No MTB shuttle service

- Riders wishing to shuttle some of the bigger gravity rides have to shuttle themselves or do more climbing than they desire.
- Encourage a local business to make an investment in providing shuttle services for riders.
- It will be easier for riders to try out your trails, and they might return with friends after this type of experience. **This will also earn an additional point.**





Destination Best Practices	Points Available	Points Earned
Signs / Wayfinding	2	2
Trailhead Amenities	2	2
Trailhead Access by Bike	1	2
Shuttle / Uplift Options	2	1
Three or More Days of Riding	2	2
Long-distance Adventure	2	0
Backcountry Experience	2	2
MTB Club	2	2
Group Rides	1	1
MTB-related Events	2	2
Community Support	2	2

Land Manager / Owner Support	2	2
Data Capture and Evaluation	1	1
Recreation Variety	2	2
Marketing Presence	2	2
Ride Center / Trails Marketing and Promotions Group	1	1
Tourism Riding Season $\geq$ 8 Months	1	1
Tourism Riding Season $\geq$ 10 Months	1	1
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>

## 3c. Analysis > Quality Trail Experience

### Highlights

- Steamboat provides some very physically demanding riding due to its' elevation. Riders with strong lungs will consistently be rewarded for their efforts with fast flowing descents. Most everyone riding here will be exhausted and ready to hoist a refreshing beverage or two by the end of the day.
- The variety of trail types available is impressive and provides riders with almost limitless opportunities to experience different styles of trail and push their abilities.
- *Grouse Ridge* provides an extremely valuable riding experience that has a unique blend of narrow singletrack filled with rugged technical features, yet still a fast flowing bike optimized trail. It is a model that should be used as an inspiration to guide future trail development.
- *Fish Creek* is fantastically rough and one of the most challenging rides that a visiting mountain biker could ask for.
- Almost every trail in the area is very well integrated into its surroundings. This creates a sense that the trails belong in the landscape and that riders are just passing through the landscape and admiring its beauty.

### Challenges

#### Challenge #1 – Emerald Mountain Trails can feel repetitive

- Many of the trails feel a little too familiar as they use very similar design and construction aesthetics.
- Make an effort to augment and enhance some of the older trails and work towards providing higher quality experiences for riders.
- Riders will be excited to have a greater variety of truly different trails. **This will also earn an additional point.**

#### Challenge #2 – Steamboat Resort Bike Park Trails Are Too Long For Beginners

- Many beginner riders will be worn out after just one run down *Tenderfoot*. Its length can leave guests feeling isolated and fatigued.
- Open up a mid-mountain lift that accesses beginner trails which are lower on the mountain.

- This will bring more riders to the park and will create an opportunity for families to recreate together. **This will also earn an additional point.**

#### Challenge #3 – Beginner Trails Around Town Push Riders Comfort Level

- *Spring Creek* can make beginner riders uncomfortable due to heavy use and potential conflict with other trail users.
- Work to educate riders to slow down on the trail. Maintain clear sightlines to prevent collisions
- Beginner riders will be encouraged to pursue the sport and explore further in the trail system. **This will also earn an additional point.**



### 3d. Analysis / Trails

#### Highlights

- Steamboat is becoming home to some of the best enduro trails. Future construction of trails such as Soda Mountain will draw a significant number of riders looking for challenging descents that require top notch riding skills and serious fitness.
- Steamboat trails truly run the gamut of types, with very challenging descents and climbs that usually require a high level of technical riding skills. This is a great place for advanced riders to push their limits without having to get too far from town.
- *Flash of Gold* provides a very well built example of sustainable singletrack trail that can be truly enjoyed by all user types.
- Steamboat Resort Bike Park has a very strong offering of Intermediate to Advanced trails, and the long runs down provide a serious physical challenge as well.

#### Challenges

##### Challenge #1 – Very Few Truly Beginner To Intermediate Rides

- There are not many options for less skilled riders to put together loops that fit their ability level. Even the *Bluffs Loop* is too physically demanding, especially for a visiting rider that is not used to the altitude.
- Develop new beginner trails close in to town and optimize loop opportunities. Connect *Bluffs Trail* and *Lower NPR Green* with an easier connector trail.
- Beginner riders will have more reasons to ride trails from town. **This will earn additional points.**

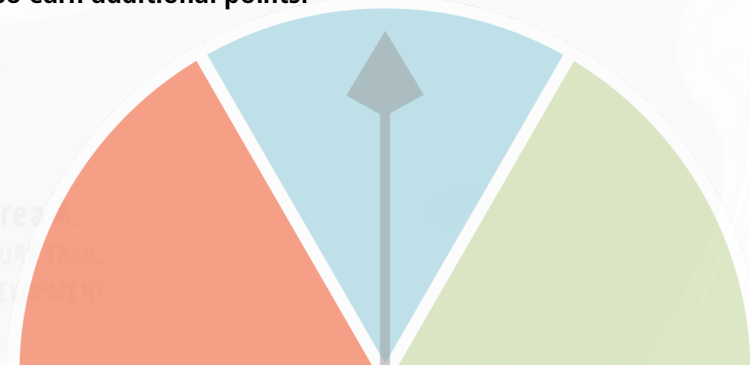
##### Challenge #2 – Lower NPR Green Is Not As Easy As It Should Be

- The average grade is a bit too steep for a true beginner flow trail. This problem is exacerbated by tightening radius turns which are more difficult for beginners to flow through. The tread width in many places is quite narrow, often narrower than other trails at Emerald which are rated more difficult.

- Look for opportunities to reduce grades, open up turn radii, and widen tread.
- Beginner riders will have more confidence to build skill on a more predictable trail surface. **This will earn additional points.**

##### Challenge #4 – No Singletrack Connection From Buffalo Pass to CDT

- The *Continental Divide Trail* doesn't connect to town with singletrack via Buffalo Pass.
- Work in partnership with land managers to develop a trail from the top of *Flash of Gold* to *Wyoming Trail*.
- Creates a huge backcountry loop with options when combined with existing trails. **This will also earn additional points.**





### 3d. Analysis / Trails

Trail Category & Name	Points Available	Points Earned	Quality Trail Experience Score	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Traditional Single-track: Easy</b> Bluffs Loop, Lower Spring Creek, Panorama, Rotary	1	1	0	Easiest trails available, relatively smooth. All are scenic and enjoyable rides and are relatively close to town (except Rotary)	Bluffs Loop is too physically demanding. Lower Spring Creek has high potential for user conflict. Very few loop options close to town.
<b>Traditional Single-track: More Difficult</b> Beall, Ridge, Flash of Gold	1	1	1	Beall provides a challenging ride that makes riders feel like they are escaping civilization. Flash of Gold is incredibly scenic with just the right amount of physical challenge.	Ridge trail is a bit more challenging than it is rated. Section along fence compromises feeling of escape because of risk to the rider of being caught on it.
<b>Traditional Single-track: Very Difficult</b> Scott's Run	1	1	1	A relentless climb with some serious technical challenges. Leads to amazing views of the wilderness and a fast narrow descent with challenging switchback turns.	Trail is rutted heavily in spots. It does not seem to get much use and is hummocky and soft from lack of user compaction.
<b>Traditional Single-track: Extremely Diff</b> Fish Creek Falls	1	1	1	Fish Creek Falls is a fantastic rough descent. So many rock challenges and enough exposure to add a sense of risk.	As riders approach the Fish Creek Falls trailhead there are increasing numbers of other users on the trail. Vegetation maintenance would help to ensure clear sightlines and prevent conflicts.
<b>Bike Specific Single-track: Easy, 1.0 miles</b> Lickety Split	1	1	0	Very beginner flow trail descent that is very close to the bottom station.	Could use better berm surfaces and reversals to make the trail feel more dynamic. A mid station lift would create better access for beginners.
<b>Bike Specific Single-track: Easy, 2.0 miles</b> Lower NPR - Green	1	1	-1	Good location, close to trailhead.	Has no green singletrack climb to access it. Turns are decreasing radius. Tread is often too narrow. Grade should be lower.
<b>Bike Specific Single-track: Easy, 3.0 miles</b> Rotary	1	1	1	A super fun flowy loop (even for more advanced riders) with good efficiency. Easy to access from Trailhead off of county road 45	Location is relatively far from town.

Bike Specific Single-track: More Difficult, 1.0 miles Wild Rose	1	1	0	Very efficient trail that allows riders enjoy good speed.	Sees significant use in both directions and could use better vegetation maintenance.
Bike Specific Single-track: More Difficult, 2.0 miles NPR Lower - Blue	1	1	0	Lots of opportunities to get off the ground and go fast	Jumps are not as predictable as they should be on an intermediate trail.
Bike Specific Single-track: More Difficult, 3.0 miles	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
Bike Specific Single-track: Very Difficult, 1.0 miles Creekside	1	1	1	Great blend of bike optimized features with techie rock moves	As a multi-use trail it seems like there is a high potential for user conflict because the trail feels like it is designed only for fast downhill riding.
Bike Specific Single-track: Very Difficult, 2.0 miles BTR	1	1	1	Very challenging trail that feels very natural yet still has bike-optimized features.	Vegetation maintenance could be a bit better to improve sightlines.
Bike Specific Single-track: Very Difficult, 3.0 miles Grouse Ridge	1	1	1	Very cool mix of terrain and features with rough loose rock, slabs and more smooth and flowy in between. Outstanding ride experience as a descent.	A significant climb or shuttle on rough steep doubletrack is required to access this trail.
Bike Specific Single-track: Extremely Difficult, 1.0 miles	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
Bike Specific Single-track: Extremely Difficult, 2.0 miles	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
Bike Specific Gravity Trail: Easy, 1.0 miles Lasso	1	1	0	Very good entry level option with gentle berms and rollers.	Sheets of plywood have been laid down to get rides over wet areas. This is dangerous and should be removed.
Bike Specific Gravity Trail: Easy, 2.0 miles Tenderfoot	1	1	0	Challenging long descent for beginner riders with good sweeping berm turns to practice cornering.	Too long for most beginners.
Bike Specific Gravity Trail: More Difficult, 1.0 miles Gunsmoke	1	1	1	This smooth rolling flow trail gives plenty of opportunities to get off the ground	Turns require too much braking and could have larger radius.
Bike Specific Gravity Trail: More Difficult, 2.0 miles NPR Upper - Blue	1	1	0	Faster speeds are no problem on this bikes-only descending trail.	Tightening radius turns force riders to brake more than is desired

<b>Bike Specific Gravity Trail: More Difficult, 4.0 miles</b> Rustler's Ridge	1	1	1	Very fast turns and long swoopy flow sections full of jumps.	Intersections with access roads can be confusing.
<b>Bike Specific Gravity Trail: Very Difficult, 1.0 miles</b> Flying Diamond	1	1	0	Big jump trail is well built and has good predictable take-offs and landings.	Significant maintenance is required to keep features riding well through the season.
<b>Bike Specific Gravity Trail: Very Difficult, 2.0 miles</b>	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Bike Specific Gravity Trail: Very Difficult, 4.0 miles</b>	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Bike Specific Gravity Trail: Extremely Difficult, 1.0 miles</b>	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Bike Specific Gravity Trail: Extremely Difficult, 2.0 miles</b> Rawhide	1	1	1	Nice and steep with narrow tread and very challenging rock features.	Wood drop at bottom will require regular inspection and maintenance.
<b>Descents ≥ 1 mile/1.6 km</b> Hot Springs	1	1	0	Gorgeous scenery along the creek, especially as you drop into narrow forested canyon	Large rocky drop in towards top is a bit too difficult for intermediate riders.
<b>Descents ≥ 3 mile/4.8 km</b> Spring Creek Trail	1	1	1	Very fun beginner descent with good width scenery	Heavily used and may need signs to encourage good user behavior
<b>Descents ≥ 5 mile/8 km</b> Ridge Trail	1	1	1	Amazing views up top and fun challenging singletrack seems to never end	Fencing along trail compromises the rider's feeling of safety at speed.
<b>Technical Descent</b> Fish Creek Trail	2	2	1	Fish Creek Falls is a fantastic rough descent. So many rock challenges and enough exposure to add a sense of risk.	As riders approach the Fish Creek Falls trailhead there are increasing numbers of other users on the trail. Vegetation maintenance would help to ensure clear sightlines and prevent conflicts.
<b>Long climb ≥ 1 mile/1.6 km</b> MGM Trail	1	1	1	Narrow and interesting with short challenging ramps	Some sustainability issues to be addressed such as de-berming in meadow section.
<b>Long climb ≥ 3 mile/4.8 km</b> Pioneer	1	1	1	Relatively smooth moderate climb with efficient consistent grades	Most users will access this trail from Zig Zag which is not a very satisfying ride.

<p><b>Long climb ≥ 5 mile/8 km</b></p> <p>Zig Zag to Valley View to Spur Run to Sunshine to Cathy's to Pete's Wicked Trail</p>	1	1	1	Valley View and Pete's Wicked make this ride worthwhile by traversing across some beautiful terrain and becoming progressively more difficult as the rider nears the summit.	Intersections through the Bike Park can be confusing
<p><b>Technical Climbs</b></p>	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
<p><b>Progressive Dirt Jump Trail Area</b></p> <p>Bear River Bike Park</p>	2	2	0	Jumps and features ride well and have good progression.	Surface is looser than preferred but well compacted. Look and feel is disheveled because of a lack of veg maintenance and landscaping.
<p><b>Progressive Skills Development Area</b></p>	2	0	0	N/A	N/A
<p><b>Pump Tracks</b></p> <p>Ski Time Square Pump Track</p>	2	1	1	Small but satisfying.	A larger size would provide more room for progression.
<p><b>Gravity Bike Park with Uplift</b></p> <p>Steamboat Bike Park</p>	5	4	1	Well designed with good variety and lots of challenging trails for descending	Needs more options to mix up the existing routes and create variety. Beginner trails need better lift access.
<p><b>All-weather trails ≥ 5 mile/8 km</b></p> <p>Yampa River Core Trail</p>	2	0	0	N/A	Does not qualify because it is a wide paved pathway not a natural surface trail.
<p><b>All-weather trails ≥ 10 mile/16 km</b></p>	2	0	0	N/A	N/A
<p><b>Trails groomed for snow-biking ≥ 10 mile/16 km</b></p> <p>Orton to Blackmere, Haymaker and Catamount Nordic Centers</p>	1	1	1	Over 16 miles of groomed trail available.	Divided among 3 separate locations
<p><b>TOTAL POINTS</b></p>	<b>50</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>		



## 4. Conclusion

### Rating

Congratulations! After reviewing all of the categories, efforts, and challenges; our scoring supports the opinion that your destination is now qualified to be a Silver level IMBA Ride Center. Our planned date for public announcement of 2018 Ride Center Awards is June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Steamboat Bike Town Ride Center Review Score						
Minimum Scores			Category	Available	Your Scores	Award Level
Bronze	Silver	Gold				
60	75	90	Services	20	18	<b>SILVER LEVEL RIDE CENTER</b>
			Destination Best Practices	30	27	
			Trail Types	50	35	
			100	<b>80</b>		
10	20	30	Quality Trail Experience	40	20	

### Terms

Consider this report as provisional. If you would like to make improvements and provide evidence of improvements to your score and Ride Center level, please contact Shane Wilson for full details and assistance with the process, [shane.wilson@imba.com](mailto:shane.wilson@imba.com).