Smartphone Data Shows that Utahns' Park Time during COVID may have Doubled

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COVID-19 impacted the lives of Utahns, changing the way we worked, socialized, and recreated. On March 26, 2020m the Governor issued a 'Stay Safe, Stay Home' order, requesting the State's residents work from home if they could, minimize contact with others, and travel as little as possible. Data suggested that for many of the state's residents, the guidelines did not stop them from getting outside and enjoying local parks, greenways, and recreation areas.

In mid-February, 2020, Google began tracking the location of smartphones with Google apps, and compared that data with travel patterns before the pandemic. We compiled the results HERE for Utah counties where enough data are available to ensure an accurate representation of the entire population. Here's what the data show:

- **Park use for the state as a whole has doubled, up 111%.**
- **Most counties along the Wasatch Front have experienced an increase in park use,** with current increases ranging from 62% (Salt Lake County) to 145% (Weber County).

- **Park use in Summit County has been below average since mid-February and is only now beginning to increase.**

The baseline period used in these data spans from January 3 to February 6, 2020, so it is difficult to discern if the increased use of parks is attributable to Utahns choosing to recreate locally during the pandemic, or just an increase in use as temperatures warm. The data do suggest, however, that despite many municipalities and counties issuing guidance to stay home, Utahns have chosen to begin getting back outside and to use their local park and public spaces.

The full set of county reports can be downloaded HERE.

Details on the data reported by the COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports data can be found HERE.