

Assateague Island National Seashore South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



South Ocean Beach Parking Area



You're Invited!

The National Park Service (NPS) is beginning a planning process for the reconfiguration of the South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle (OSV) Entrance Road at Assateague Island National Seashore (the Seashore). As part of this process, the NPS is holding a 30-day public comment period and will host a public meeting at the Seashore to gather your input. Your participation is vital to the success of our planning process.

We invite you to review this newsletter, which shares the reasons for the project, issues the NPS hopes to address, a brief project description, and three conceptual designs for how the facilities at the South Ocean Beach recreation area could be reconfigured to address the issues.

You are encouraged to share observations, comments, and ideas about the information presented in this newsletter and at the public meeting. The NPS will use the information and ideas you provide to improve the designs and ensure that we have the necessary information to move forward in the planning process.

Public Meeting

June 28, 2022

3 p.m. to 7 p.m. EST

**Assateague Island National Seashore
Headquarters / Environmental Education Center
7206 National Seashore Lane
Berlin, MD 21811**

Background

The South Ocean Beach recreation area is approximately 1¼ miles south of the Seashore's entrance. The area is accessible from Bayberry Drive, a park road with one northbound lane and one southbound lane, and Oceanside Drive, a park road with one lane southbound. Both roadways merge into a traffic circle that circulates vehicle traffic through the recreation area. A map of the facilities that serve South Ocean Beach, as well as the project study area, are provided on page 2 of this newsletter.

The South Ocean Beach parking area is located southwest of the traffic circle. Prior to Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the South Ocean Beach recreation area consisted of two parking areas, one east of the OSV entrance road near the beach, and one smaller parking area for the Life of the Dunes Trail at the location of the current lot. However, after Hurricane Sandy damaged the original parking area, the NPS responded by constructing the current parking lot further inland where it would be less vulnerable to storm activity and less susceptible to damage.

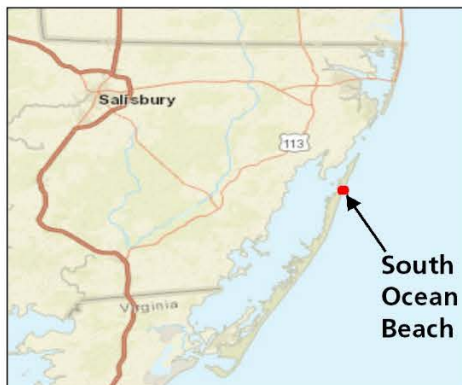
The South Ocean Beach recreation area provides visitors with access to beach activities, the OSV zone, the Life of the Dunes Trail, and duck and deer hunting areas. The area also provides opportunities for nature study, birding, picnicking, and other leisure and educational activities. There is also a multi-use path that enters the recreation area from Oceanside Drive and ends at the entrance to the Life of the Dunes Trail.

OSV use is a unique and popular attraction at Assateague Island National Seashore that is accessible only from the South Ocean Beach recreation area. Approximately 14,000 permits are sold annually by NPS to access the OSV zone, and nearly 91,000 vehicles entered the OSV zone in 2021.



Assateague Island National Seashore

South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



LEGEND

-  Project Study Area (24.5 Acres)
-  Life of the Dunes Trail

0 250 500
Feet



Project Location

Assateague Island National Seashore
Berlin, Maryland

Project

South Ocean Beach Parking Area and
Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Reconfiguration

Figure No.

1

Title

Project Study Area



Assateague Island National Seashore South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



What are the reasons for this project?

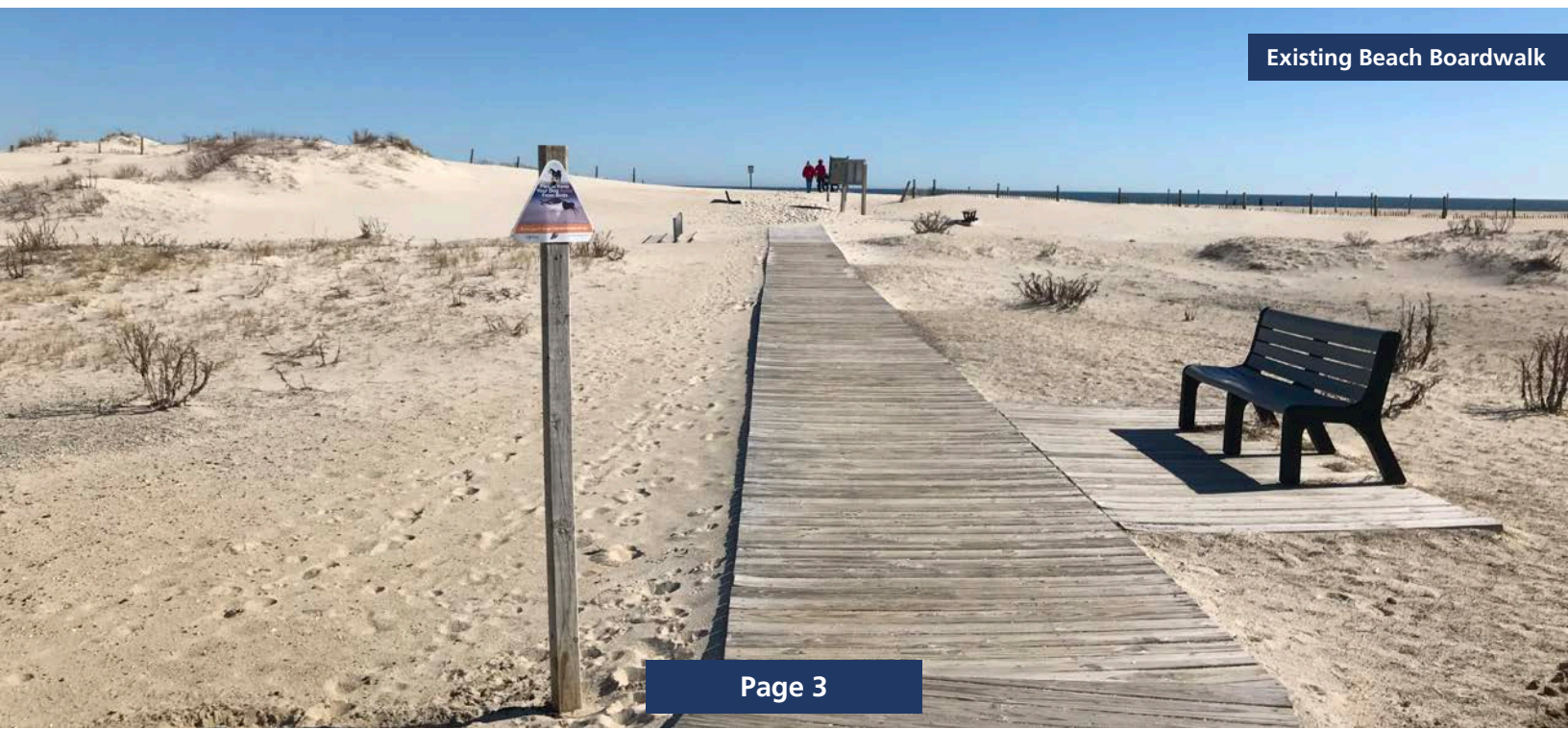
To make the South Ocean Beach recreation area more resilient to natural coastal processes and future storm events, improve safety, and protect and enhance the visitor experience and park resources through visitor use management strategies.

What issues would be addressed by the project?

ISSUE #1 The westward dune movement that is encroaching on the facilities at the South Ocean Beach recreation area. Data collected by NPS suggest that a portion of the traffic circle and most of the OSV entrance road will be impacted by natural coastal processes by 2040, making the facilities that provide access to this popular recreation area unsustainable at their current location (see figure at right).

ISSUE #2 The increasing visitor use at the South Ocean Beach recreation area that is causing congestion and safety concerns and is resulting in resource degradation because:

- The South Ocean Beach parking area does not provide sufficient capacity to accommodate visitor use at the recreation area.
- The existing OSV entrance road cannot support the line of vehicles that will form when the OSV zone reaches the 145-vehicle maximum capacity.
- The current configuration of the recreation area presents potential safety issues, especially when crowded, between pedestrians, drivers, bicyclists, and wildlife.



Existing Beach Boardwalk

Assateague Island National Seashore

South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Project Description

This project would reconfigure the facilities that serve the South Ocean Beach recreation area, including the parking area, OSV entrance road, and other infrastructure and amenities, to manage visitor use more effectively.

The project generally includes:

- Relocating park infrastructure west of projected 2040 secondary dune areas
- Reconfiguring the parking area to be more efficient and to better support current visitor use of the recreation area
- Relocating the OSV entrance road to better support current visitor use and reduce pedestrian crossings
- Upgrading amenities such as showers, changing rooms, and restroom facilities
- Relocating access to the Life of the Dunes Trail
- Relocating the existing multi-use path
- Developing infrastructure that can be easily modified to accommodate future alternative transportation options, such as shuttle / bus service from the mainland

Conceptual Design Options

The conceptual design options described on the next page have been developed by NPS for the reconfiguration of the facilities at the South Ocean Beach recreation area.

Graphics of each design option are provided at the end of this newsletter.

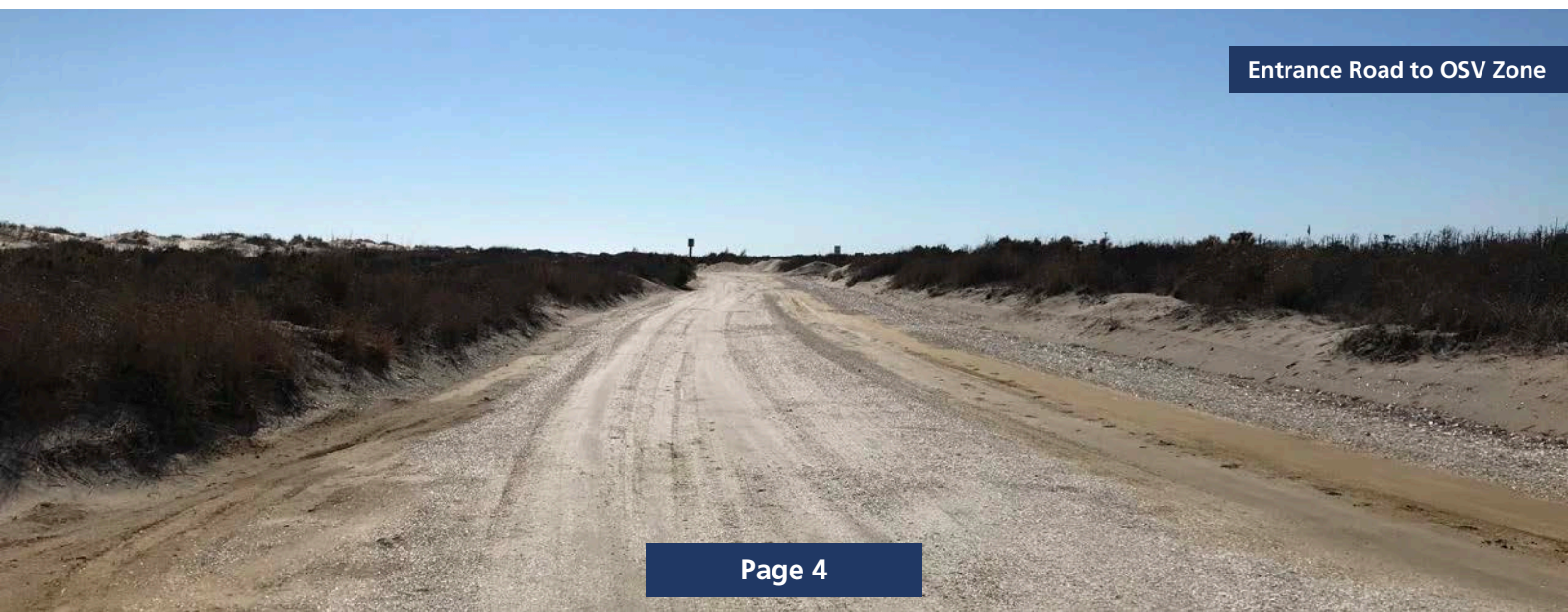
Please provide us with your thoughts about these conceptual design options and offer any ideas you might have to improve them.



Pedestrian Crossing at OSV Entrance



Life of the Dunes Trailhead



Entrance Road to OSV Zone

Assateague Island National Seashore

South Ocean Beach Parking Area and

Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Design Concept 1

Circulation

Concept 1 would relocate the traffic circle approximately 500 feet northwest of its existing location. The traffic circle is conceptually designed to be similar in size to the existing circle. Bayberry Drive and Oceanside Drive would merge into the traffic circle to the north and northeast, respectively. In addition, 11-foot-wide traffic lanes would be provided for vehicle circulation features throughout the recreation area.

Parking Area

A reconfigured parking area would be provided under Concept 1 at the same general location as the existing lot. A total of 150 standard 9-foot-wide parking spaces and six Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant spaces would be provided. Asphalt would be used to surface the parking area, which would be striped to establish 45-degree parking spaces, one-way drive lanes, and pedestrian walkways. The parking area would be designed to allow recreational vehicles (RV) to circulate through the parking area, but no RV parking spaces are proposed. The entrance and exit to the parking area would be split due to the one-way traffic flow pattern and to avoid impacts to a wetland along Bayberry Drive.

OSV Zone Entrance/Exit

The OSV entrance road would be relocated in this Design Concept 1. The road would be paved with asphalt but would switch to a clamshell surface near the projected 2040 secondary dune line. This project would make space to accommodate about 90 vehicles to queue at the gate entrance. The OSV exit lane would include air compressor stations like the existing stations and a vault toilet would be added.

Beach Access and Other Amenities

Two paths would be established to provide access to the beach from the parking area. The paths would be designed to align with pedestrian flow paths in the parking area and would be spaced apart to spread visitors out on the beach. Vault toilets, showers, and changing rooms would be installed adjacent to each boardwalk for visitors. Access to the Life of the Dunes Trail would be reestablished at the south end of the parking area.

Multi-Use Path

A 10-foot-wide asphalt multi-use path would be constructed around the parking area providing a loop that would connect to the existing path along Oceanside Drive. Bike racks would be provided at beach paths and at the Life of the Dunes Trail entrance.

Design Concept 2

Design Concept 2 is similar to Concept 1 except the parking area would be striped to establish 90-degree parking spaces and two-way drive lanes. The 90-degree spacing requires less area to accommodate 150 parking spaces so the parking area would be smaller than in Concept 1. Also, the entrance and exit to the parking area would run parallel to each other between the parking area and the traffic circle.

Design Concept 3

Design Concept 3 is similar to Concept 2 except the parking area would be constructed using a clamshell surface like the existing parking area. This surface type cannot be striped to delineate parking spaces. The parking area in Concept 3 was designed to accommodate 150 spaces but assumes 10 ½-foot parking spaces to take into account that visitors may leave more space between vehicles than in a paved lot with striping, resulting in a slightly larger parking area compared to Concept 2.

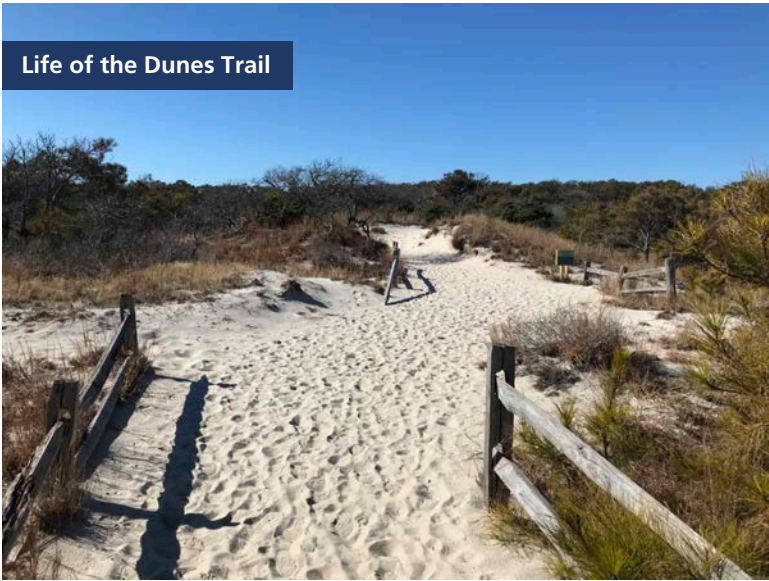


OSV Entrance from Traffic Circle



The Planning Process

The public is encouraged to provide suggestions on the **South Ocean Beach Parking Area and OSV Entrance Road Reconfiguration Project** at Assateague Island National Seashore. Once we have gathered public input and refined the project and alternatives, the NPS plans to progress to the next phase of the project by initiating a NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) review that will allow for additional opportunities for public input.



	How to Comment
1	Submit written comments online at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/SouthOceanBeach (preferred method)
2	Submit written comments at the in-person public meeting on June 28 th
3	Mail written comments to: Superintendent Attn: South Ocean Beach Reconfiguration 7206 National Seashore Ln Berlin, MD 21811
4	Scan the QR Code to access the project webpage and submit comments

Comments will be accepted starting Monday, June 6. The comment period ends on **JULY 5, 2022**.

Notes: Comments will not be accepted by fax, e-mail, or any other way than those specified above. Please also note that your entire comment—including personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and e-mail address—may be made publicly available at any time pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations will not be accepted.

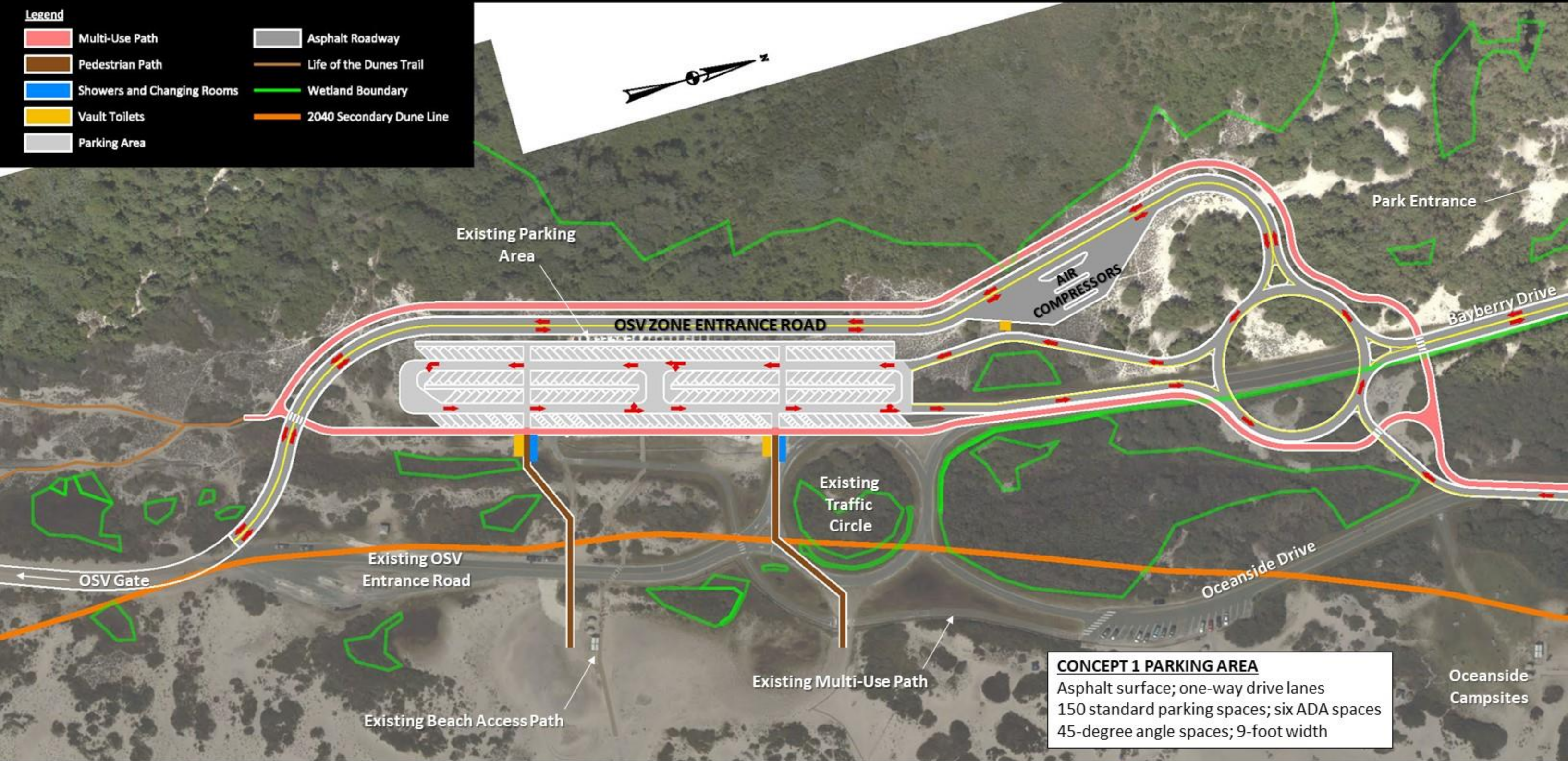


Assateague Island National Seashore

South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration



- Legend**
- Multi-Use Path
 - Pedestrian Path
 - Showers and Changing Rooms
 - Vault Toilets
 - Parking Area
 - Asphalt Roadway
 - Life of the Dunes Trail
 - Wetland Boundary
 - 2040 Secondary Dune Line



DRAFT CONCEPT 1

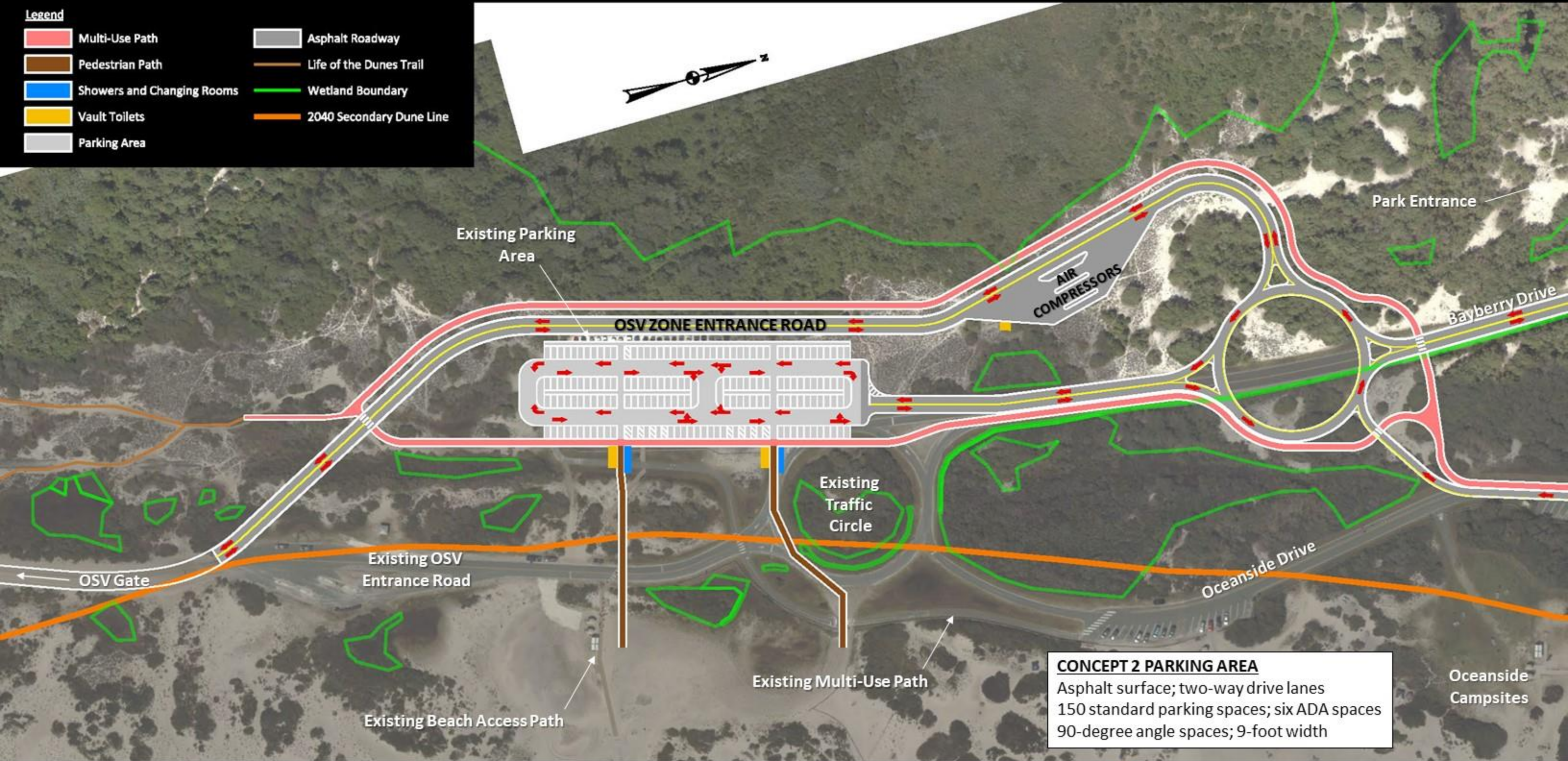
NOT TO SCALE

Assateague Island National Seashore

South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration



- Legend**
- Multi-Use Path
 - Pedestrian Path
 - Showers and Changing Rooms
 - Vault Toilets
 - Parking Area
 - Asphalt Roadway
 - Life of the Dunes Trail
 - Wetland Boundary
 - 2040 Secondary Dune Line



DRAFT CONCEPT 2

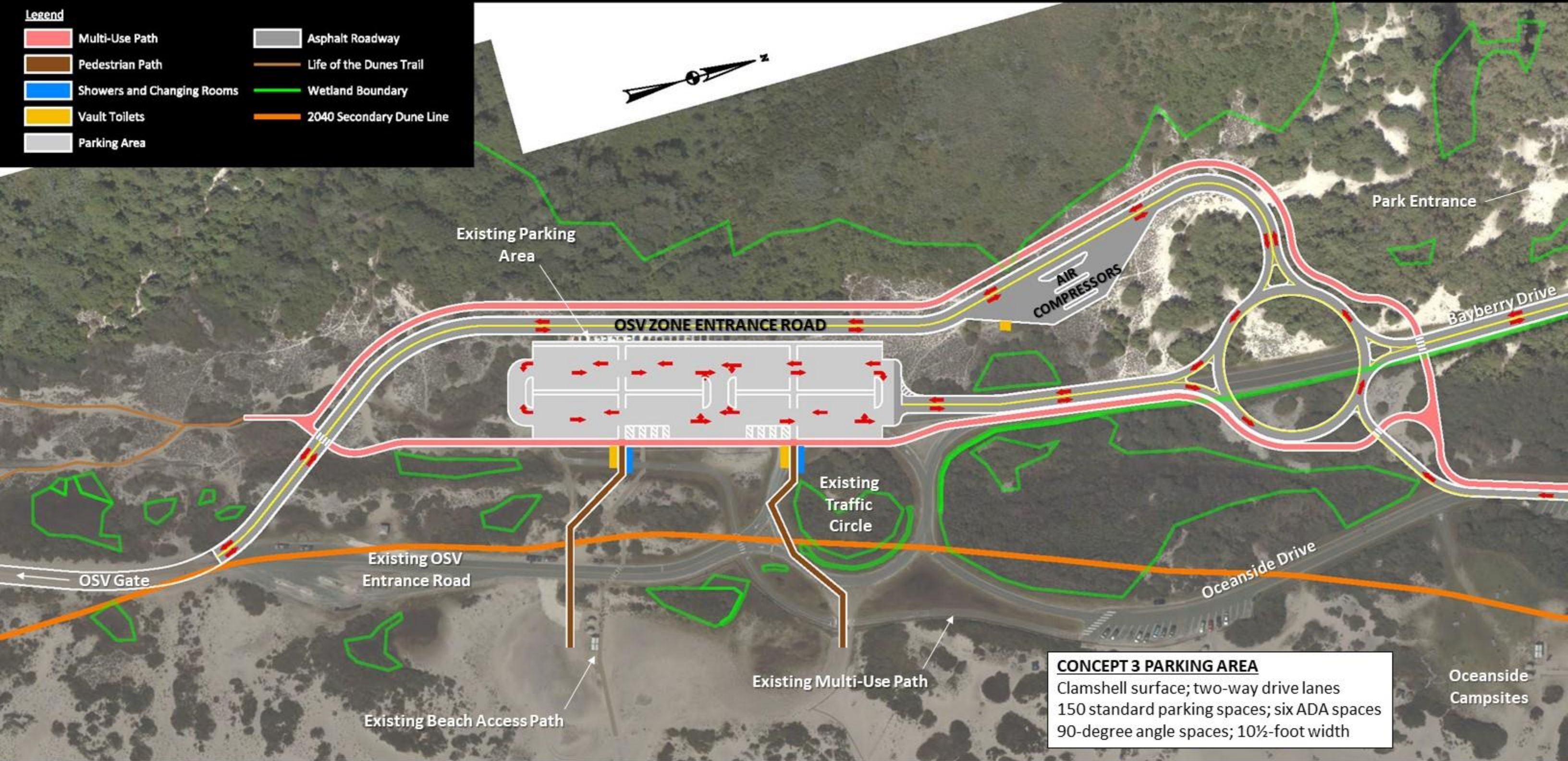
NOT TO SCALE

Assateague Island National Seashore

South Ocean Beach Parking Area and Over-Sand Vehicle Entrance Road Reconfiguration



- Legend**
- Multi-Use Path
 - Pedestrian Path
 - Showers and Changing Rooms
 - Vault Toilets
 - Parking Area
 - Asphalt Roadway
 - Life of the Dunes Trail
 - Wetland Boundary
 - 2040 Secondary Dune Line



DRAFT CONCEPT 3

NOT TO SCALE