

Vicksburg National Military Park

Gateway Redesign Project: Civic Engagement Newsletter



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

You're Opinion Matters!

Vicksburg National Military Park (VNMP) is considering a major redesign of its primary gateway and entrance road system. This initiative, led by the National Park Service (NPS), aims to create a safer, more efficient, and welcoming entrance for all visitors. As VNMP anticipates increased visitation and evolving operational needs—especially with the planned construction of a proposed state-run interpretive center adjacent to the park—the redesign is a proactive response to current and projected traffic impacts, community growth, and preservation of resources.

This early civic engagement is intended to identify community priorities, local concerns, and ideas that can help shape potential alternatives before formal environmental review begins. Feedback received during this phase will inform future planning. Your feedback is vital. The NPS seeks input from local residents, businesses, and stakeholders to ensure the gateway redesign aligns with community expectations and preserves the park's natural and cultural resources.

Entrance sign and Visitor Center at VNMP
Source: NPS



Vicksburg National Military Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Memorial Arch at VNMP
Source: NPS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

VNMP includes approximately 3,600 acres spread across several separate properties, all commemorating the Vicksburg Campaign of 1862-1863. The main battlefield, located in Vicksburg, Mississippi, is roughly 1,800 acres and flanks the Mississippi River. Because the river was one of the most important economic and strategic features on the continent during the war, controlling Vicksburg became essential for the Union's success. The Vicksburg Campaign began in 1862 and finished with the Confederate surrender on July 4, 1863.

The national military park was established in 1899 and was transferred from the War Department to the NPS in 1933. Today VNMP includes almost 1,400 monuments and markers honoring Civil War troops, as well as 18,000 troops buried in Vicksburg National Cemetery, and the U.S.S. Cairo—a recovered Civil War gunboat.

NEED AND PURPOSE

Vicksburg National Military Park Entrance Redesign

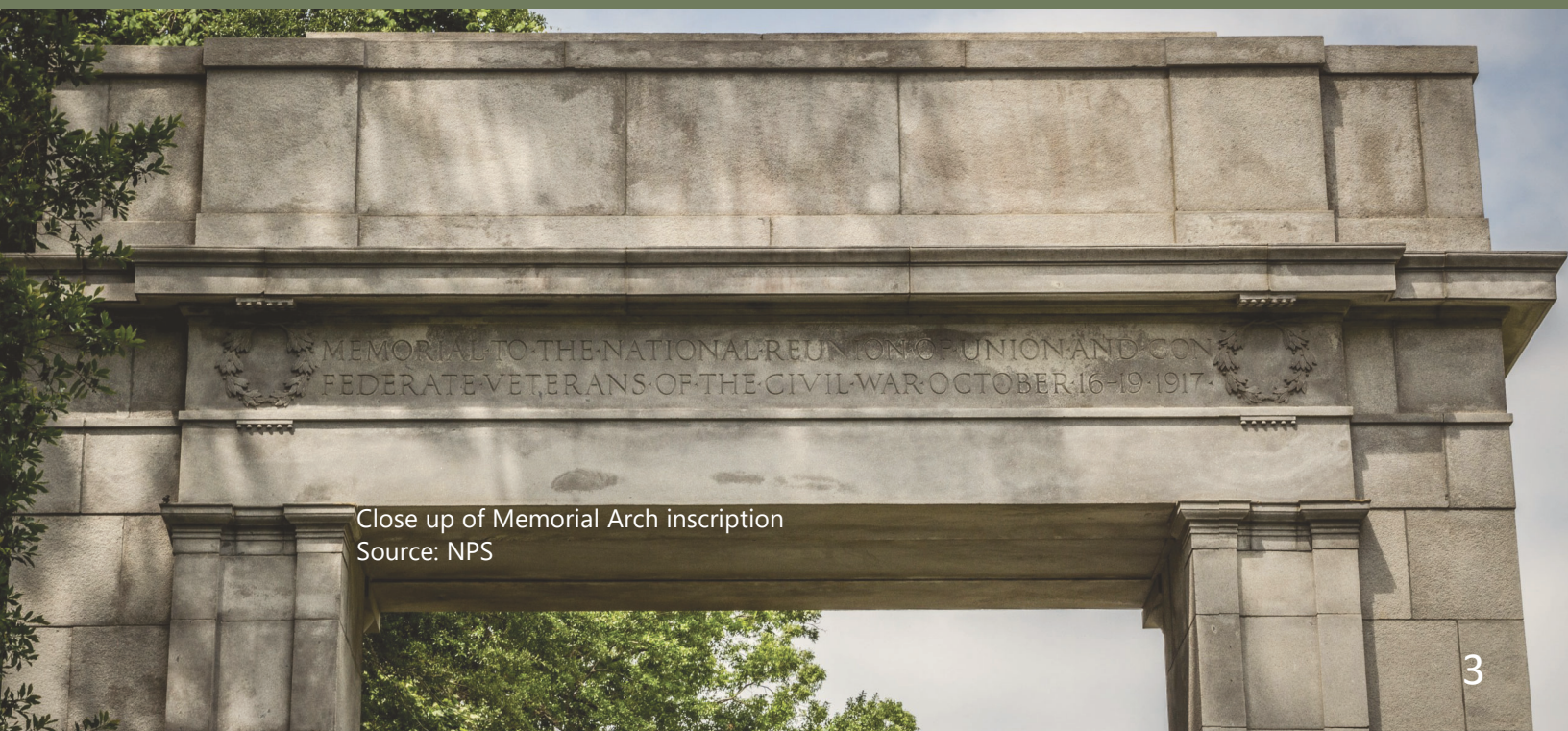
VNMP's main entrance sits at a busy four-way intersection with a traffic light between Clay Street and Old Highway 27 in Vicksburg, MS. The entrance sequence is difficult to navigate in modern vehicles, with tight turns for large vehicles, and insufficient stacking space at the entrance booth for peak visitation. The project area is roughly a 30-acre semicircle bounded between the Union Avenue ingress, the Confederate Avenue egress, and the VNMP service road. The area under consideration includes the VNMP Visitor Center, parking lot, Memorial Arch, the NPS VNMP official sign as well as several other smaller monuments and markers.

Need:

Improvements are needed to provide a safer, more efficient, and more accessible entrance supporting visitor access while also allowing the park to meet current and anticipated operational needs. The existing entrance configuration no longer functions efficiently for current visitation patterns and operational needs. The roadway geometry, traffic circulation, and arrival sequence create congestion, vehicular and pedestrian conflicts, and operational inefficiencies that adversely affect visitor safety and the overall visitor experience. In addition, the existing entrance does not effectively accommodate connections to the proposed adjacent state-run interpretive center or provide an intuitive gateway into the park.

Purpose:

The purpose of the proposed action is to redesign the primary gateway and entrance road system at VNMP to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts, enhance traffic circulation, provide more efficient and intuitive access to park facilities, accommodate current and future visitor use, and better protect and preserve significant historic monuments and commemorative features by reducing conflicts between visitors, vehicles, and these important cultural resources.



Close up of Memorial Arch inscription
Source: NPS

ISSUES IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA

Visitor Safety:

Vehicle/Pedestrian Conflicts: Frequent conflicts occur near the Memorial Arch and official park sign where visitors often step onto the road to walk, run, and bicycle.

Blind Curve: North of the Memorial Arch, a downhill blind curve limits driver visibility and creates unsafe conditions for pedestrians approaching around the curve.

Photograph Locations: Popular photo spots at the entrance contribute to unpredictable pedestrian movements and potentially hazardous vehicular-pedestrian interactions.

Traffic Operations:

Queueing: Vehicle queues from the ticket booth currently extend onto Clay Street during heavy visitation and special events, causing traffic disruption and safety risks. Vehicles, which pull into the entrance area but do not wish to pay the VNMP entrance fee, either add to the queue or require an illegal U-turn to exit the park.

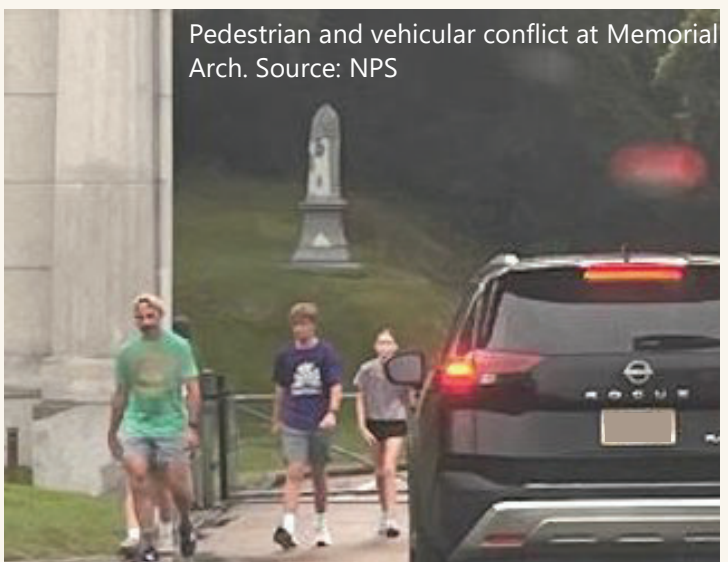
Large Vehicles: Buses, RVs, and tractor trailers struggle to maneuver at the entrance, risking damage to the Memorial Arch and signs. Limited paved space makes safe turnarounds difficult, and accommodating tractor trailers requires temporarily closing part of the tour road for contraflow entry.

Entrance Booth: The existing entrance booth configuration contributes to backups and overflow onto Clay Street, particularly during peak visitation.

Future Conditions:

Proposed Interpretive Center: The proposed state-run interpretive center is anticipated to increase visitor volumes and exacerbate existing congestion and safety concerns.

Future Traffic Projections: Even without the proposed state-run interpretive center, a 2025 traffic model indicates unacceptable delays at the Clay Street/I-20 Frontage Road intersection by 2050.



PRELIMINARY OPTIONS

The following options are preliminary and are presented solely to encourage discussion during early civic engagement. None of these options represent a preferred alternative or a final list of options which could be considered. Information gathered during this outreach will help inform future planning and the development of alternatives for environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

NO-ACTION OPTION:

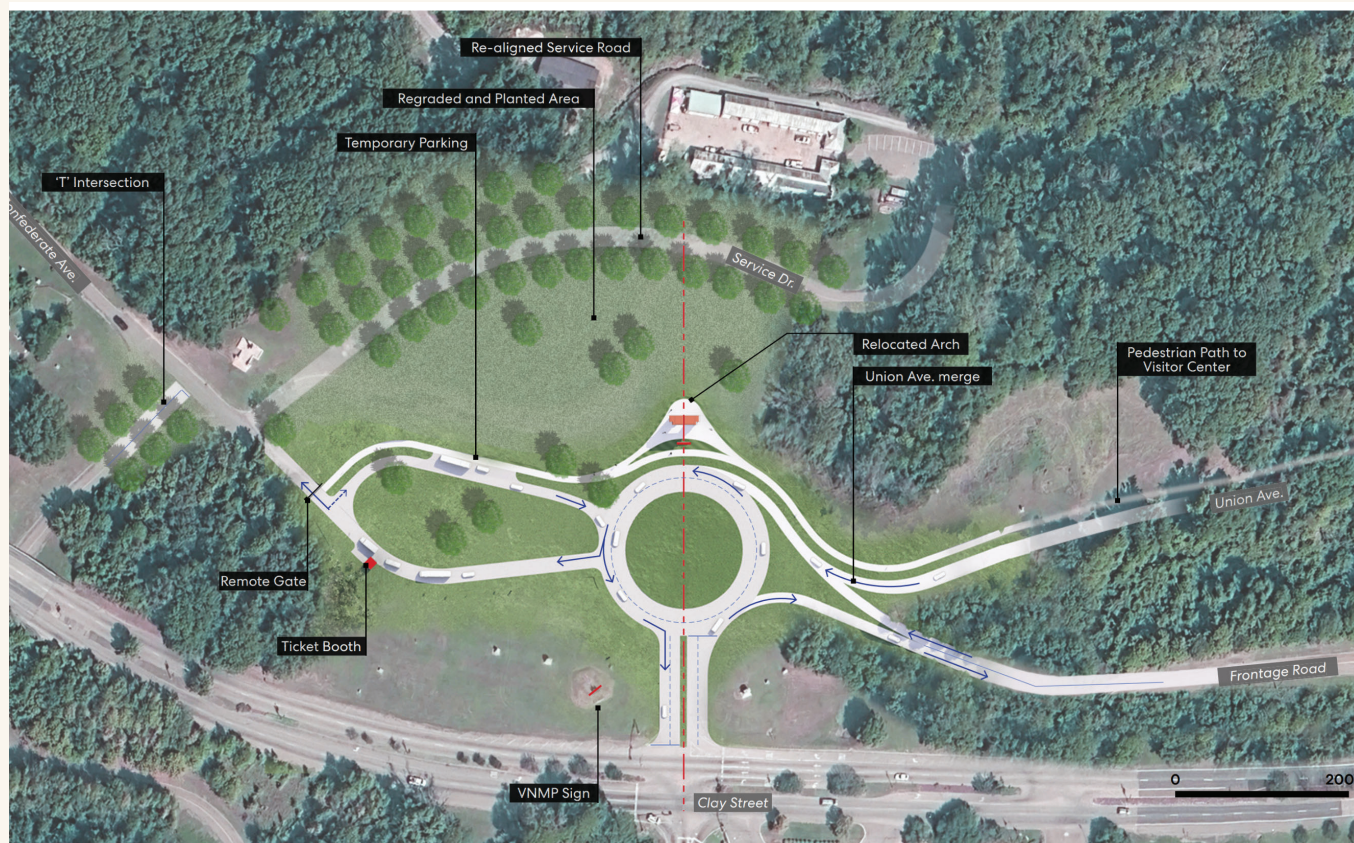
The NPS would not redesign the entrance area, and all current VNMP infrastructure would remain in its present configuration. The proposed state-run interpretive center would be constructed on adjacent state land according to the state's independent funding and construction schedule. Based on a 2025 traffic study of the VNMP entrance area, the no-action alternative will eventually lead to traffic failures and increased congestion.

ACTION OPTION:

Under this option, VNMP would redesign the entrance to include all the following features:

Proposed Roundabout: Add a roundabout north of the existing lighted intersection to improve traffic flow, reduce congestion, simplify access between the park and the proposed state-run interpretive center, and reduce vehicle queues extending onto Clay Street. A roundabout would improve traffic circulation at the intersection of Confederate Avenue, Union Avenue, and the frontage road, while providing direct access to both the proposed state-run interpretive center and the park. The roundabout would improve ingress and egress for all visitors, increase intersection safety, and provide sufficient vehicle queuing capacity to reduce traffic backups onto Clay Street during periods of peak visitation.

REDESIGN FEATURES CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE →



REDESIGN FEATURES CONTINUED

Road Realignments: Realign two road sections.

1. The frontage road would be realigned to feed into the proposed roundabout allowing traffic to enter through a lighted intersection for safer ingress and egress. **2.** Straightening the service road to eliminate unnecessary winding turns for tractor trailers and park vehicles and create better line of sight for pedestrians on this road.

Reverse Tour Road Circulation: Reverse the direction of the tour road to a clockwise flow, to support more intuitive navigation and improve operations, and return the park to its originally designed traffic flow pattern. This change also slows traffic on a blind turn thereby reducing vehicular and pedestrian conflicts.

Relocate Memorial Arch with Plaza: Establish a pedestrian plaza for relocating the Memorial Arch. This provides a safe location away from the road for visitors to enjoy the arch and minimize the risk of injury or damage from vehicles to both pedestrians and the arch.

Fee Booth Configuration: The fee booth would be relocated onto Confederate Avenue to better accommodate the clockwise tour road circulation with an egress lane for visitors that do not wish to pay the entrance fee.

Stormwater and Erosion Control: Redesign stormwater drainage in the entrance area to address improper water runoff now resulting in major erosion impacting park infrastructures and resources.

Removing VNMP Visitor Center: Remove the existing visitor center building and relocate NPS visitor services into the proposed state-run interpretive center. The existing visitor center has been determined not to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places and does not have the capacity to accommodate future growth of visitation and the anticipated needs for park operations.

Community Engagement: Your Role in Shaping the Gateway

VNMP invites residents, businesses, and stakeholders to participate in public review and comment opportunities. Your input helps guide the NPS to develop solutions and complement the community's goals and vision. All comments received from the public and stakeholders will be reviewed and considered. The civic engagement period is a 30-day comment period beginning **October 5, 2026** until **November 5, 2026**. Please submit all comments no later than **November 5, 2026**.

Note: VNMP cannot accept comments specific to the proposed state-run interpretive center, as this project is managed separately from the VNMP proposed entrance redesign.

What do you think?

- How would changes to the entrance road affect your experience?
- What other safety or accessibility issues do you foresee within the new entrance design?
- What traffic or pedestrian safety concerns have you experienced near the park entrance?
- What aspects of the current entrance work well and should be retained?
- What should the National Park Service consider as it develops possible redesign concepts?
- How can the entrance better serve visitors while preserving the historic character of the park?
- What are other community concerns related to access, circulation, or nearby businesses that should be considered?

How to Comment



Submit comments electronically (preferred method):

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/vickgateway>



Mail or hand-deliver written comments to:

Vicksburg National Military Park
3201 Clay St.
Vicksburg, MS 39183