



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park

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Grand Canyon News Release

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National Park Service Seeking Comments on Grand Canyon's South Entrance Road Improvements

GRAND CANYON, AZ – The National Park Service (NPS) is now accepting public comments for proposed improvements to Grand Canyon National Park's South Entrance Road (Highway 64) between the community of Tusayan and the entrance station as the agency develops an Environmental Assessment (EA). The park will work collaboratively with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to address the proposed work in the ADOT right-of-way, south of the park boundary. The purpose of these improvements is to provide an effective system that would address the crowding and safety issues that can occur during the high visitor use season at the south entrance to Grand Canyon National Park. The project proposal includes the construction of two additional northbound lanes, and an independent bypass lane that will be available to transit vehicles, employees and residents, and other users as determined by the NPS. The bypass lane would diverge from Highway 64 between the park boundary and the park sign and would merge back into the highway approximately 750 feet north of the entrance station. Besides improving visitor experience, this proposal would improve safety to the public, employees and residents and reduces impacts to park resources.

The South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park receives more than four million visitors each year, and most of these visitors arrive through the south entrance. On a busy summer day, wait times at the entrance station can easily exceed 40 minutes and traffic can back up on Highway 64 into the community of Tusayan, south of the entrance station. This congestion leads to safety concerns for visitors entering the park, pedestrians in Tusayan when traffic backs up, and NPS employees who are walking among waiting vehicles and answering questions. Other concerns include air quality from idling vehicles, and social trails and litter from people who leave their vehicles and walk into the adjacent forests. These concerns have resulted in separating the South Entrance

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Road improvements from the larger transportation plan, which is currently underway and expected out for public review in October 2007.

The primary objectives for making improvements to the South Entrance Road include:

- to improve visitor experience by reducing long waits at the entrance station;
- to improve safety of visitors, employees and residents at the entrance station and into the local community of Tusayan;
- to ensure compatibility with other future transportation options;
- and to cooperate with gateway communities, agencies, tribes and other stakeholders to achieve mutual transportation goals.

The current project proposal is a preliminary option that is under consideration and subject to change. An EA for the proposal will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework for the following:

- to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives;
- to evaluate potential issues and impacts to park resources and values;
- and to identify mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The NPS encourages public participation through the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to formally comment on the project – once during initial project scoping and again following release of the EA. The NPS is currently in the scoping phase of this project and invites the public to submit their comments.

Comments will be accepted for 30 days and should be either posted online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> or sent to: Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Attn: Office of Compliance and Planning, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023 by June 17 2007. Additional information about this project can be found on the park's Web site at www.nps.gov/grca/compliance or by calling Jill Beshears or Grace Ellis, Project Planning Leaders, at (928) 638-7794 or (928) 226-0159 (respectively) or Vicky Stinson, Project Manager, at (928) 774-3026.

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