



## Intermountain Region (IMR)

L RTP Update #3 – October 2012



The Macro Trends report is the third step in the IMR's Long Range Transportation Plan process:

- Develop Planning Framework
- Identify Baseline Conditions
- **Identify Macro Trends**
- Develop Needs & Financial Analysis
- Develop Planning Scenarios
- Develop Final Plan with Selected Scenario

The full technical report, *Changing America: Macro Trends for Transportation*, is available on the project website.



### For more information

Quarterly project updates are posted on our website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/imrlrtp>

Check back often and let us know your thoughts on the project.

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## Intermountain Region Examines Macro Trends

The National Park Service (NPS) has an array of new challenges and opportunities as it seeks to provide visitor access to parks over the next 20 years. The IMR Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) examined a wide range of reports, transportation studies, planning documents, and visitation data to identify emerging trends that will influence transportation programs.

### The Relationship of Population Changes to Recreation, Leisure, and Visitation

The IMR examined changes in demographics and visitation over the 20-year period from 1990-2010 and projections for population growth by the year 2030. The report also addresses changes in recreation and leisure habits, as well as preferences and expectations in communications technology, ITS, and other advanced technologies.

- Higher levels of congestion in heavily visited parks tax fiscal and natural resources and are likely to continue. Simultaneously, less-visited parks are not growing in visitation, but struggle to maintain transportation infrastructure at historically acceptable levels.
- The needs of aging, ethnically diverse, and international visitors will require adjustments in management practices. Many parks have begun to make these transitions, but the costs can be significant.
- The evolution toward mechanized recreation presents a special dilemma for parks, who must decide when and how to integrate activities into the visitor experience that may have unintended, or unwanted, consequences.
- Electronic communications also present real challenges and choices. The value of real-time communications, electronic audio tours, and network connectivity carries trade-offs with budgets and the environment.

### Adapting to a New Landscape

In addition to protecting resources from in-park human impacts, the NPS must continue to plan for effects of natural hazards, including climate change. Probable events to consider include more wildfires, migration of species, and more frequent severe weather events. The NPS must also prepare for increasing development in once-rural areas.

- Climate change may impose significant costs to the planning, construction, maintenance, and management of many elements of the transportation system.
- Habitat fragmentation, a consequence of both natural and human events, threatens to reduce at-risk species to island populations. The resulting impacts to resource preservation and visitor experience are little understood and require research and planning.
- Aging transportation infrastructure, plus the potential need to invest in new options, impacts cultural and historic resources to an unprecedented degree. The attendant costs will need to be absorbed in budgets.

### Sustaining Visitor Access through NPS Leadership

As the gap between funding and available resources continues to grow, the NPS is ready to respond with new tools and strategies. Performance-based planning and programming will ensure that investment decisions are wise and aligned with the NPS mission and other long-term goals. This includes investing in transportation strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provide better park connections for urban populations, and reduce congestion.

- The LRTP seeks to manage transportation assets in balance between expenditures and funding.
- Non-traditional sources, such as participation in partnerships that benefit all parties, will become more important over time.
- Measuring transportation system performance against realistic goals will help support good decision-making at all levels of park management.