

Transportation Plan / Environmental Impact Statement Public Comment Summary Report on Preliminary Concepts



On the front cover: “Word Cloud” representing the most frequently used words submitted during the comment period.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From October 13 to November 30, 2016, Acadia National Park (ANP) held a public comment period to receive feedback on preliminary concepts for the park's transportation plan and environmental impact statement (EIS). While not required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Acadia National Park felt that public feedback on the preliminary concepts would be vital to inform development of the draft environmental impact statement. To inform the public of the range of preliminary concepts and provide an update on the planning effort, a newsletter was released on October 13, 2016, that describes the draft goals and desired conditions for each fundamental resource and value, management strategies within each preliminary concept, and next steps in the planning processes and schedule. The newsletter was made available on the project website (parkplanning.nps.gov/acadtransportationplan) and in paper copy at public open house meetings.

Additionally, open house events were held in Prospect Harbor, Maine, on Wednesday, November 2, 2016, and in Bar Harbor, Maine, on Thursday, November 3, 2016. A total of approximately 230 people attended the open house events. Both the availability of the newsletter, the length of the comment period, and the dates, times, and locations for the open house events were announced in a news release issued on October 12, 2016.

While the full breadth of comments received is summarized within this comment summary report, the following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the most commonly heard opinions and suggestions. Overall, many commenters believed that traffic congestion, parking shortages, and crowding on the Mount Desert Island (MDI) portions of Acadia National Park needs to be addressed. Though opinions varied as to which strategy is best suited for the park, many commenters expressed that the chosen strategy should make use of best available technology and allow for some degree of adaptability and flexibility for those planning a trip to the park. Additionally, many local residents commented that they have needs that differ from out-of-town visitors and desire a system that can accommodate their visitation patterns.

Many commenters also asked that the park retain a diversity of uses and recreation opportunities, including retaining the quiet character of the Schoodic Peninsula. Many commenters expressed concern over some of the potential management actions identified for the Schoodic Peninsula, as they felt there was little need for action at this time and the strategies would be overly restrictive to local use patterns.

Lastly, many commenters also stressed the importance of partnering with local organizations and towns to plan comprehensively for transportation in the region. They pressed that the plan considers possible ripple-effects of future changes and that park managers work closely with local towns and citizens to mitigate these potential effects.

CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS

During the public scoping period, the park received 213 individual correspondences through e-mail, directly in the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system, or through mail correspondence. Additionally, notes taken on flipcharts at both public open house events were entered into the PEPC system for review and analysis.

The National Park Service collected public comments during this scoping phase of the planning effort in order to understand the public's perspectives on key issues and preliminary concepts for transportation futures at Acadia National Park. Within the NEPA process, thoughts and ideas from individuals, organizations, and agencies are analyzed and considered equally. For this reason, the unique content of comments, rather than the number of times a comment was received, will be used to guide the development of a range of reasonable management alternatives for the plan. This scoping report summarizes all public comments received during this comment period.

Table 1 provides the geographic distribution of public comments that were submitted directly to the PEPC website or to the park.

Table 1. Geographic Distribution of Correspondences

State	Percentage	Number of Correspondences
ME	76.5%	163
MA	4.7%	10
FL	2.3%	5
UN	2.3%	5
NY	1.9%	4
PA	1.9%	4
NJ	1.4%	3
MD	0.9%	2
OH	0.9%	2
OK	0.9%	2
CA	0.5%	1
CO	0.5%	1
CT	0.5%	1
DC	0.5%	1
IL	0.5%	1
MT	0.5%	1
NC	0.5%	1
OR	0.5%	1
RI	0.5%	1
UT	0.5%	1
VA	0.5%	1
VT	0.5%	1
WI	0.5%	1
Total	—	213

In addition to general public comments, the National Park Service received letters from official representatives of the following agencies and organizations:

- A Climate To Thrive
- Adventure Cycling Association
- Atlantic Climbing School
- Bar Harbor Bicycle
- Bicycle Coalition of Maine
- Bike MDI
- Dawnland LLC, DBA Jordan Pond House
- Destinations North America
- Friends of Acadia
- Maine Sierra Club
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Natural Resources Council of Maine
- Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.
- Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Correspondence. A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter. It can be in the form of a letter, written comment form, note card, or open house transcript.

Comment. A comment is a portion of the text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject or issue. It could include such information as an expression of support or opposition to the use of a potential management tool, additional data regarding the existing condition, or an opinion debating the adequacy of an analysis. The correspondence identification number is provided at the end of quotes in brackets.

Comment Summary. A grouping that is centered on a common subject. Comment summaries combine similar comments. Representative quotes from the comments may be presented to create a comment summary.

COMMENT SUMMARY

Four questions were posed to commenters to receive targeted feedback on the preliminary concepts. These questions included: Which specific strategies in the preliminary concepts do you think should be carried forward to best achieve the purpose and address the need for the plan, and why do you think these strategies should be carried forward? Which specific strategies in the preliminary concepts do you think would not achieve the purpose and address the need for the plan, and why do you think these strategies should not be carried forward? Are there other strategies that should be included in the preliminary concepts that are not already presented? If so, which strategies and why should they be considered? What other comments or suggestions do you have?

Within the comment summary that follows, major concepts and unique perspectives are represented for each of the major categories of transportation management strategies. These categories include general transportation strategies, visitor orientation strategies, entrances and access strategies, bicycle and pedestrian use strategies, circulation strategies, parking strategies, public transit strategies, commercial activity strategies, and other/miscellaneous strategies. Within each of these

categories of strategies, summaries are broken down by general concerns; comments directed at Mount Desert Island; comments directed at the Schoodic Peninsula; and in some cases, the unique actions specific to the strategy. Additionally, representative quotes from individual comments are provided throughout the summary to further illustrate public concerns.

GENERAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

This section represents comments regarding general transportation strategies for Acadia National Park.

Parkwide. Many commenters stressed the need for action because the current condition of congestion and traffic is harmful to park resources and values. Many commenters requested clarification of the “peak season” time period and the definition of “carrying capacity” often mentioned in alternatives. Comments had suggestions for improvements outside of the park that would fit with the overall transportation plan for the park, including converting the Duck Brook Connector hiking trail to a bike path. Regarding planning in general, a commenter stated that “the issues around increased visitation to ANP requires a holistic approach. . . The park has a number of different user groups making a blanket approach to parking and congestion issues inappropriate.”

Mount Desert Island. Regarding Mount Desert Island, commenters were generally supportive of managing crowding, congestion, and transportation related issues in the park. Many of these commenters mentioned that the traffic and congestion issues facing the park are also prevalent across Mount Desert Island. Thus, these commenters noted that comprehensive regional planning is necessary for solving transportation issues. For example, one commenter said that “any and all alternatives proposed by the Park Service for Acadia’s transportation must be compatible with and encourage an expanded public transportation system to and from Mount Desert Island.” In addition to regional planning, commenters suggested planning for the impacts that diverting visitors from hot-spots could have on traditionally low-volume places on Mount Desert Island. As such, commenters suggested conducting a “test run” for the proposed alternatives to study the effects of the strategies. Most commenters agreed that restricting RVs and large vehicles, especially on Cadillac Mountain Road, would help the current congestion problem. They also encouraged increasing bus and service routes but believed that more data was needed to build a successful transit system. They underline the need for planning with conservation and sustainability in mind and hope to see more “green” solutions proposed. Lastly, commenters often stressed the importance of safety in planning for transportation on Mount Desert Island.

Schoodic Peninsula. Like Mount Desert Island, commenters were concerned that transportation plans for Acadia National Park would have an adverse effect on surrounding communities. These commenters believe that the park needs to cooperate with local fire and rescue agencies, as well as municipalities on any transportation plan, to make sure that “future alternatives for the Schoodic Peninsula are reflective of the greatest needs of the park and for nearby communities.” Commenters also made miscellaneous suggestions on how transportation plans could be implemented, including a phasing plan and adding a passenger ferry that could transport vehicles. Commenters stressed the need to consider aquatic life and habitat given any change to infrastructure. Lastly, some commenters mentioned that Schoodic is not as congested as Mount Desert Island and so does not warrant action.

VISITOR ORIENTATION STRATEGIES

This section represents a summary of comments aimed at visitor orientation strategies at Acadia National Park.

Parkwide. Commenters expressed a need for improved signage throughout the park. Currently, existing visitor orientation is, as one commenter described, “unclear or lacking.” Commenters specifically called for improvements to signage related to directions, speed, facility locations, and presence of distinct user groups (such as bicyclists, horse-back riders, buses, and pedestrians), changes in management strategies, and safety information. The use of adaptable electronic signs was also mentioned as a possible strategy to improve orientation. Commenters noted that these electronic signs could show changes in fees, parking, public transit, and park rules and regulations. Commenters also noted that increased information about the Island Explorer could assist in visitors planning their visit and notify visitors of bus wait times and locations. Commenters noted that these “live updates” could be stationed throughout the park and online and could include peak hours, public transit incentives, information about entrance stations, bicycle information, events, and fees. This sentiment was captured by one commenter who asked the park to “consider moving towards a fairly fixed annual schedule to reduce confusion. Clear and regular expectations will help increase acceptance,” and to “consider a broad communications and signage strategy to prepare and alert visitors to whatever access plan is decided upon to avoid confusion and ongoing management headaches.”

Mount Desert Island. Commenters suggested a number of factors be monitored around Mount Desert Island to allow visitors to make more informed transportation-related decisions. These factors included traffic congestion, parking availability, weather, and a live camera of Cadillac Summit. Additionally, information signs and kiosks at Eagle Lake carriage roads and along Cadillac Mountain Road could inform visitors about special circumstances or conditions.

Schoodic Peninsula. Commenters suggested the park provide more information to visitors about the local history of Schoodic at particular points of interest. Other commenters suggested improving the signage at the Schoodic Woods Campground to clarify the intent of the parking area and information. Another commenter suggested adding signage to East Schoodic Drive informing tourists of times when there is no vehicle access to the park. One commenter thought that “information might be provided at trail and bike path sites that are significant to local history, such as who lived in the house that used to stand along the Alder Trail, what parts of the trails and paths were old roads when the area was occupied.”

ENTRANCES AND ACCESS STRATEGIES

This section represents a summary of comments aimed at entrances and access strategies at Acadia National Park.

Parkwide. Commenters suggested enforcing restrictions on large vehicles including charter buses and RVs during peak season or in sensitive areas. They also recommended instituting car-free day or hours with exceptions for those with different accessibility needs. Commenters noted that these car-free days could also be used for educating the public on sustainable practices.

Regarding entrance stations, many commenters approved of the idea of adding more entrance stations, but they caution that increased congestion in the surrounding communities may be an undesirable effect. Some commenters felt that those who frequently visit the park, such as locals, employees, or volunteers, should be given special park access passes, while others believed limiting

access generally would have negative impacts. For example, some commenters noted that special user groups such as photographers, artists, birders, and fishermen require specific hours of the day or night for their activities and that putting limits on off-hours could reduce the ability of diverse user-groups to access the park.

Some commenters noted that some visitors put value on the quiet hours of the day, the quiet areas of the park, and the easy access of the park for local residents. Many locals commented that they should receive special consideration, stating that Acadia is different than other national parks because it is “alive with the people who love it and live in it all year.” One local resident noted that they do not want to see their connection to Acadia go away because of “understandable and necessary strict new policies.” The commenter also noted that they take their “unofficial responsibilities as Acadia’s stewards very seriously, and if at all possible, would love to find a way to incorporate these new policies without drastically changing our relationship with Acadia.”

Mount Desert Island. Some commenters support the consolidation in entrance stations because it could enable better control of the number of vehicles in the park and could reduce the overall number of cars in the park. They offer that some entrance stations could function as exit-only stations during the peak season. Other commenters were in favor of adding entrance stations because, if strategically located, they could provide express routes to certain destinations while reducing traffic in other areas. Other strategies suggested by commenters include offering a fast-pass system for season pass holders, moving informational signage about entrance stations farther away from the station to provide more time for motorists and cyclists to determine their appropriate entry, and designing a lane for large commercial vehicles. On Cadillac Mountain, some commenters were concerned that access-restrictions could shift congestion to other areas of the park, though they did advocate for restrictions on vehicle size. Lastly, some commenters wished for a reduction in cruise ships coming to Mount Desert Island; increased access for those paddling in on boat; and distinguishing between a car-access pass, which would include restrictions, and bike/pedestrian passes, which would not be restricted.

Schoodic Peninsula. As on Mount Desert Island, commenters suggested restricting large buses and RVs on the peninsula. Locals were concerned about limiting access because those restrictions might impact their daily lives. They suggested that special considerations be made for locals, such as locals’ passes or discounted passes. Dog owners were concerned that they would not be able to bring their dogs to the park if restrictions on personal vehicles were made. Some mentioned pass-free hours in the early morning.

Reservations. The reservation system described in the preliminary concepts was met with agreement and contestation, as well as requests for special treatment for distinct user-groups. Locals again pressed for a special system whereby they could have a number of daily reservations allocated to them, urging the park to “remember that local residents also consider this home, as well as a national park.” The climbing schools and outfitters associated with the park likewise requested access to the park free from a reservation or metering system. Some commenters believed that first-time visitors or distant travelers should have reservations allocated to them. Various commenters thought that a reservation system is a good idea for reducing traffic and congestion; however, they believe it would only work successfully if visitors knew beforehand about the system. For example, commenters were concerned that some people may arrive without prior knowledge of the system and would be caught in a situation where they could not enter the park. They were worried that those without cell phones or reliable access to technology might not be able to navigate the reservation system. Others were concerned that someone would monopolize the reservation system. Overall, commenters stressed the need to consult locals, organizations and businesses associated with the park, and municipalities before planning for a reservation system.

Metering. The majority of commenters were concerned that a metering system would cause further congestion and lines outside of the park and that it would be difficult to enforce. They were also concerned that it would diminish spontaneity, with comments such as: “whether from the perspective of a visitor or a resident of MDI, what I do not want to do is decide that I want to go for an outing of some sort and then have to sit in a line because the metering says the park is too full.” Some commenters suggested mixing the metering system with a reservation system. In this scenario, those with a reservation would enter the park during their time allotment while those who come without a reservation would enter based on the metering system. Others suggested using metering for Cadillac Mountain and the Park Loop Road during the peak season, but not for the rest of the park.

Transit Only. Commenters were both for and against the idea to limit all vehicle access to the Park Loop Road to only public and commercial transit vehicles. Those who were for transit only access explained that the system has worked in other national parks, namely Zion and Denali, and so it could work for Acadia. Some commenters said a mandatory transit system would be appropriate in the peak season or during peak times of day but not in the off season. They requested that wait areas, shelters, signage, transit hubs, and parking lots outside of the park be built if mandatory transit is implemented. Those opposed to transit only access state that the system would be impractical for certain user groups, such as kayakers, rock-climbers, painters, or photographers with lots of equipment. Two commenters were concerned that the elderly and chronically ill would not be able to use the transit system and so would be excluded from the park. One commenter felt that mandatory transit would make for a “flat” experience “void of a personal interaction” with the park. Mostly, those against were concerned about the outside communities bearing the weight of cars shifted from inside the park to outside the park.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN USE

Opinions on strategies regarding bike and pedestrian use.

Parkwide. Commenters overwhelmingly opposed restrictions to cycling, though they did approve of increased access for cycling. Commenters said, “Restricting bicycle access to the park is counterproductive if sustainability and reducing parking congestion are top goals” and “bicyclists take up very little space and cause minimal wear and tear to the roads.” However, other commenters felt that bicyclists take liberties with road rules and often pose a safety hazard. Most agreed that it is necessary to improve safety conditions and awareness for all road users. They emphasized enforcement of road etiquette and safety. As for pedestrians, commenters suggested more crosswalks, reduced speed limits, and more restored historic trails. For both bicyclists and pedestrians, commenters wished to see broadened access into the park and improved connectivity between walking paths, bike paths, and bike lanes.

Mount Desert Island. Commenters suggested ways to improve the flow of bicycle traffic. They liked the idea of Park Loop Road as a one-way road with a broader shoulder for walking and cycling. Many suggestions were based on the idea of linking ANP bike lanes to roads in Bar Harbor, allowing for visitors to cycle from Bar Harbor into the park. Currently, commenters find the roads too dangerous to bike on into the park. Commenters did suggest restricting bicycle access to Cadillac Mountain because currently many cyclists ride too fast down the summit and cause a hazard to other users. Overall, bicycle safety was stressed. For pedestrians, commenters suggested encouraging walking up Cadillac and expanded hiking trails along carriage roads.

Schoodic Peninsula. Commenters wish to see added bicycle and pedestrian lanes and trails on the Schoodic Peninsula. They mentioned specific locations where bicycle lanes could be painted,

Schoodic Woods campground. A few commenters suggested that a bicycle and pedestrian path could run parallel to the road to Schoodic Point and along the Schoodic Loop Road, stating, “repurposing the Schoodic Loop Road into a bike lane will encourage many more visitors to bike in that part of the park and will also slow the traffic of the motorists, thereby improving safety for all.”

CIRCULATIONS STRATEGIES

Opinions on strategies regarding visitor circulation.

Parkwide. Commenters suggested changing the speed limit to 25 mph throughout the entire park because the existing alternating speed limits can be confusing. They also suggest improved connectivity to adjacent towns. Others, however, do not recommend a reduction in the speed limit because congestion is variable by season. Generally, commenters are concerned about safety, especially as related to dangerous actions by automobile drivers. Commenters find that drivers go too fast or drive the wrong way. Bicycle riders find that pull-offs are dangerous for them because drivers merge out of pull-offs into bike lanes. Commenters noted that drivers pass each other on curves, posing a danger for other vehicles and bicyclists.

Mount Desert Island. There were many opposing views concerning circulation on Mount Desert Island. Some commenters oppose the two-way circulation system on Park Loop Road. In this camp, commenters believe that the two-way road would create safety hazards for bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. They were worried that the system would create more traffic and more conditions for conflict, especially at new left turns. On the other hand, some commenters support the two-way road system. These commenters believe such a system would improve transportation efficiency, would provide more convenient travel between destinations, and would allow a diversity of views and vistas. Under a two-way road system, these commenters expressed a need for adequate signage to direct traffic. Regarding a one-way Park Loop Road, commenters that expressed support for that strategy believe it would improve safety for cyclists, allow for a passing lane, and would increase efficiency of the Island Explorer buses. Those in opposition find that a one-way Park Loop Road would increase travel distances, would hinder emergency response, and would create congestion on MDI roads outside the park. Commenters also stated that the “specific strategy of turning the lower mountain road to one way is not in compliance with the rights of the Mount Desert town to use the launching ramp at Jordan Pond and to use the road for driving between towns.” Regarding the reversal of the Park Loop Road, those in agreement believe the system would increase safety for cyclists, would provide better views and vistas of the ocean, and would integrate well with the proposed strategy of relocating the entrance stations. Those in opposition believe the reversal would have limited benefits but would require a tiresome change in signage, lanes, and entrance stations. Locals also are worried that the reversal would create more traffic in outside locations such as Bar Harbor. Regarding scenic pull-offs and overlooks on Mount Desert Island, commenters wished for improved safety, visibility, and access. For intersections, commenters suggested making improvements to visibility, flow, and multimodal access.

Schoodic Peninsula. Commenters supported a reduction in speed limits on Schoodic Loop Road. Some commenters were in support of implementing a lane dedicated to bicycles and pedestrians to improve safety and encourage multimodal transportation. Those in opposition to the dedicated bike/ped lane were so because “people in cars, on foot, and on bikes will always gravitate to the shore side of the road,” whether they are allowed to or not. Another commenter suggested adding a third lane for stopping, while another suggested building a road that can adapt to sea level rise.

PARKING STRATEGIES

Opinions on strategies regarding parking.

Parkwide. Commenters agree that the current condition of parking is not sustainable because of user conflicts, too few parking spaces, and poor surfacing. Commenters argue for increased parking lot size and quantity, improved circulation within parking lots, restrictions on parking access or vehicle size, improved pull-off parking and right-lane parking, and improved access to trails, visitor centers, and bus stops from parking locations. As stated by a commenter, “Motorists in all types of vehicles, large and small, struggle to find adequate space to park, frequently parking inappropriately on the rocks, straddling the curbing, in commercial vehicle locations or well beyond the limits of marked parking spaces, further impeding traffic circulation and endangering the well-being of pedestrians.”

Mount Desert Island. There were many opinions regarding parking on Mount Desert Island. Primarily, commenters were clear that they did not want parking lots to close. Rather, they wished to see better access to trails, visitor centers, facilities, and public transit from parking lots. However, there was disagreement on whether to remove or reduce right-lane parking. Many commenters in favor of removing right lane parking noted that it should be accompanied with an increase in public transportation or increased pull-out parking elsewhere. Others hoped to see the existing right-lane parking turned into a bike/ped lane. Those in opposition to removing right-lane parking explained that only three miles of nine available right-hand parking is used; thus, a reduction in or removal of those parking spaces is not necessary. Overall, with regard to informal parking areas, commenters were in agreement that such parking spaces need to be addressed. Commenters find informal pull-off spaces to be a safety hazard. They suggest formalizing and improving access to these parking areas. If parking restrictions are put into force, commenters wish to see increased public transportation and suggest only restricting parking when necessary and not during the entire year.

Many commenters suggested controlling parking through time-limits, especially on Cadillac Mountain. Specific locations were repeatedly mentioned with regards to parking. The most frequent mentions were directed at Eagle Lake, Route 233, and Schooner Head. At these locations, commenters wished for improved circulation, expanded parking infrastructure, and improved signage. One commenter mentioned that closely managing popular parking lots increases the congestion of smaller trail-head lots saying “it would be better to eliminate the trailhead parking problem entirely by not allowing any cars in these tiny lots during peak season.” Also, commenters suggested using the ferry terminal for parking and considering adjacent communities when planning for parking. Commenters were concerned about the environmental impacts of building new parking lots. As such they wished to see already-impacted areas repurposed for the use of parking infrastructure.

Schoodic Peninsula. Some commenters made suggestions for additional parking at Schoodic. They suggested adding parking to Schoodic Point but implementing time restrictions. Additional parking was recommended for Little Moose Island, Blueberry Hill, and trailheads on the east side of Schoodic Head. A dirt lot was suggested near the Alder trail. A commenter suggested resurfacing the parking lot at Winter Harbor Marina. Commenters wished to see existing turnouts widened and striped. Many commenters do not like the rock borders restricting access to these turnouts. Regarding the turnouts, one commenter said, “Visitors need a safe place to park and unload their chairs or painting equipment on the west side of the loop road.”

PUBLIC TRANSIT STRATEGIES

Opinions on strategies regarding transit.

Parkwide. There are aspects of the current public transit system that commenters wish to see continued into future plans. They like the fee-free operation and the no-reservation necessary policy. However, they suggested changes such as improved visibility, extended hours of operation, more frequent stops, alternate routes, improved transfers, and more service stops. Additionally, commenters wish to see more facilities such as visitor centers, transit hubs, weather shelters, and restrooms to accommodate the transit system. One commenter explained that “the goal should be to reduce motor vehicle volumes in the park while still providing access.” Lastly, some commenters expressed support for utilizing the cruise ship terminal to use as a transportation hub.

Mount Desert Island. Commenters had questions regarding public transit alternatives. They asked, “how would service between western and eastern MDI change?” “How would bus service increase from Southwest Harbor?” “How long would the service run?” “What are the “peak hours” referred to in alternatives?” “Where would MDI residents park to board the bus, especially on the west side?” Commenters also had many suggestions. They suggested expanding the routes along popular locations, creating an express-route for recreation user-groups such as bicyclists and kayakers, establishing a shuttle service from the old ferry terminal, and creating a plan that considers MDI-local needs.

Schoodic Peninsula. Many commenters expressed a desire to make the bus service more attractive to visitors. They suggested off-site parking in Winter Harbor and Birch Harbor, bus stop shelters, syncing the Island Explorer schedules with the ferry schedules, using carbon-reduced vehicles, and more frequent services in a wider service-area.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Opinions on strategies regarding transportation-related commercial activity.

Parkwide. There were many varying opinions on how commercial activity should take place at Acadia National Park. Overall, commenters agreed that tour buses are good for the park because it reduces private vehicles. They especially enjoy open-air tour buses. However, many commenters believed that there are too many large tour buses that conflict with personal vehicles, and that this scenario creates congestion. Some commenters are in support of park concession tour buses that could reduce congestion and improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. They wish to see commercial tour vehicles replaced with concession contracts along busy routes. Others encouraged the continued access of commercial tours because “tour companies, especially from cruise ships, may not wish to be tied to standard shuttles, and their time constraints will lead to conflicts.” Another commenter supports private car-based tours, similar to models found at the Grand Canyon and Yosemite national parks. In this model, locals, car-sharing services, and hotels can give private tours from their vehicles.

Mount Desert Island. Commenters in support of concession tours replacing private tours found that such a system would reduce congestion, especially on Park Loop Road, and that concession tour drivers could be better screened for quality and safety. This would make bicycling on the island safer, as “every cyclist who rides the Park Loop regularly has a story about almost getting run over by a tour bus driven by someone not paying attention.” Those who oppose concession tours replacing private tours believed that such a system would be too difficult to implement, as it would be “very difficult for a visiting bus to hire a local guide as well as paying for the concession service.”

Schoodic Peninsula. One commenter suggested opening up a bicycle rental business in the park and Winter Harbor to better link the park with outside communities by bicycle.

MISCELLANEOUS STRATEGIES

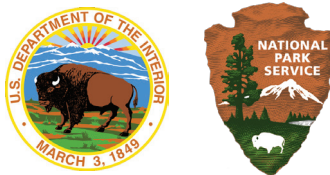
Opinions on strategies regarding items not closely related to transportation.

Parkwide. Commenters encouraged the park to pursue environmental sustainability as a priority of future planning. Many commenters suggested reducing, or consolidating, the amount of signs in the park because they “distract from Acadia’s beauty.” However, locals wished for more public notifications about meetings regarding the park. Another frequent mention was the need for more restrooms and other facilities, such as lockers, and to have the placement of those facilities based on the future transit strategy. One commenter suggested an artist-in-residence program. Overall, commenters expressed values and interests that they wish not be hindered in the future transportation strategy. These values include the preservation and protection of the park’s natural resources, the web of interaction between the park and adjacent localities, dog-friendly access, and the ability to bring cross-country skis, bicycles, kayaks, easels, photography equipment, and other large equipment into the park.

Mount Desert Island. A number of commenters suggested closing gift shops on Mount Desert Island. They said “there are plenty of shops on the island to satisfy the shopping need.” Commenters also suggested closing the Jordon Pond House. As one commenter put it, “the tradition of the Jordan Pond House has always been a memorable Acadia experience. Because of overcrowding, this particular unique visitor experience has been greatly diminished. . . I would like to recommend the closing of the Jordan Pond House, transforming it into the new Acadia National Park Natural Science and History Education Center.” Locals wished to be more involved in the planning process, while another commenter was bothered that locals want special access to the park.

Schoodic Peninsula. Commenters suggested the park stop advertising and marketing the Schoodic area as the “quiet side” of the park to prevent the area from becoming too crowded. Commenters also had concerns about the communication between the park and the public regarding the planning process. Commenters wanted the park to be more engaged with local communities and to hold meetings in a town-hall format.

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

