



Envision the Future of Acadia National Park’s Transportation System
Acadia National Park Transportation Plan – Draft Environmental Impact Statement Newsletter

DEAR FRIENDS,

I am pleased to announce that Acadia National Park Draft Transportation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement is available for public review and comment. The draft Transportation Plan is an important milestone in creating a shared vision for enhancing visitor experience, managing congestion, protecting natural resources, and improving safety in Acadia National Park.

This draft Transportation Plan is critical so that Acadia can continue to provide a high quality experience for park visitors. With the park’s visitation increasing by 59% over the last 10 years, we need to take some common sense actions now to address this growth and allow for sustainable growth in the future.

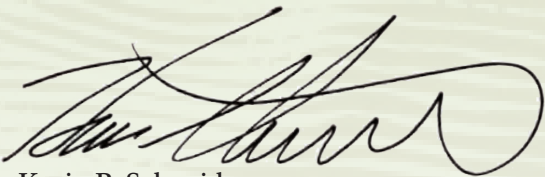
The draft Transportation Plan is built on public comment periods and open houses in the summer of 2015, and again on the preliminary alternative concepts in the fall of 2016. The plan also reflects numerous conversations with local business owners, area residents, local government officials, and our partners and stakeholders.

Now we need your feedback again. In particular, we want to hear your ideas on the draft plan before we proceed. It is important to recognize that while we have identified a preferred alternative, we have not yet made a final decision. Public input is a key element of our planning process, and we want to fully consider your feedback and ideas on our preferred alternative before a final decision is made. Ultimately, a different alternative could be selected, or a new alternative representing a different combination of strategies could be developed in the final Transportation Plan.

When looking at the proposals and providing feedback, please consider that you do not need to endorse or oppose any alternative in its entirety. Comments are welcome on any aspect of the plan, and you should feel free to suggest new ideas or switching components of one alternative with another.

As we move forward in exploring different ways to manage the park for the future, I hope you will stay connected and be an active participant in this important planning process. Please consider joining us at open house events being held in both Prospect Harbor and Bar Harbor to learn about, discuss, and comment on the draft plan. With your continued interest and support, we will develop a plan that improves your experiences at Acadia National Park, addresses safety concerns, and preserves this special place’s unique natural and cultural heritage.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the development of the draft Transportation Plan. We hope to hear more from you soon!



Kevin B. Schneider
Superintendent, Acadia National Park

TALK TO US – WE’RE LISTENING

We are interested in hearing your thoughts on the draft Transportation Plan. We will be accepting feedback during a 60-day comment period between April 27 and June 26, 2018. The public is encouraged to comment.

There are a number of ways to participate in this process and make your voice heard. You may submit your comments electronically by visiting the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: go.nps.gov/AcadiaPlan

Once on the website, select “Open for Comment” to provide your thoughts on the draft transportation plan/EIS. Comments may also be submitted in writing to the following address:

Acadia National Park
ATTN: Transportation Plan
PO BOX 177
Bar Harbor, ME 04609

Please submit all comments via the PEPC website, standard mail, or during an open house event. The NPS will accept comments until June 26, 2018.

YOU’RE INVITED!

The National Park Service will be hosting open house events on Mount Desert Island and the Schoodic Peninsula and will be hosting a Facebook live meeting during the public comment period. The purpose of the open houses and meetings are to present the draft Transportation Plan and receive public feedback. Please stay tuned for specific dates and times and plan on joining us and sharing your ideas.

WHAT IS PEPC?


Public involvement is a critical part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process. To provide information and collect public input, the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website is used for many planning projects. Planning information, updates, meeting notices, and documents can all be found on a park’s PEPC site. When documents are open for public comment, comments from individuals, civic groups, public agencies, and governing bodies can be submitted on the site. PEPC allows NPS staff to gather and consider public comments in a cost-effective and timely manner. Comments are stored in a secure database as part of the official administrative record for the plan. Public comments and the names of those making comments may be released to the public at the end of the comment period in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

A specific PEPC site for the transportation plan has been created for this planning effort. Check it out at go.nps.gov/AcadiaPlan

Foundation for Planning and Management

GOALS AND DESIRED CONDITIONS


This plan was designed to be consistent with Acadia’s purpose and significance and ensures the protection of the park’s fundamental resources and values. When considering the effectiveness or appropriateness of the management strategies in the draft plan, remember that any management or operational changes should be compatible with attaining the goals and desired conditions for the park’s fundamental resources and values.


Range of Visitor Experiences

Goal
Provide for a range of opportunities to experience the landscape that provide high quality, resource-related visitor experiences while ensuring a safe and positive social environment.
Desired Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitors are provided a variety of safe, convenient, conflict-free, and sustainable access to park resources and experiences using a variety of means, including private automobile, commercial transportation, Island Explorer buses, or by foot or bicycle.• High-quality programs, services, and facilities are provided that are accessible and usable by all people.• Visitors are informed about the area, know what to expect, and have planned their visit before they arrive at the park.• High-quality experiences are provided in settings with a range of visitor densities (high to low) that are not dominated or degraded by crowding or congestion of vehicles or visitors. The number of visitors to key park attractions is managed in a way that prevents conflicts over available parking spaces, between different activity participants, and provides access for a variety of activities.• The Schoodic Peninsula and the Western Mountain roads and the surrounding areas and trails are managed for low-density use and solitude.• Visitors understand the historic significance of the park’s cultural resources, including the motor roads, as historic resources.• Traffic is predominantly free flowing with minimal congestion that does not compromise safety and emergency response. Visitors in private vehicles are able to find parking spaces at destinations most of the time but with acceptable delays. The Island Explorer buses can easily circulate throughout the park.• Visitors with disabilities have equitable opportunities to access all park facilities where possible.• Views from the historic Cadillac Mountain summit are dominated by a natural landscape interspersed with unobtrusive rural community development.• Visitors can have a quiet, contemplative experience at Sieur de Monts. Visitors can access an easygoing environment for enjoying the natural and cultural landscape. Vehicles in the area are consistent with the quiet, contemplative nature of this place.• Entrance facilities have adequate capacity to accommodate a variety of transportation modes. Equitable queuing options are available. Specific locations provide a high-quality, seamless transition among various transportation modes.



WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT?

An environmental impact statement (EIS), is a document required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for certain actions “significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.” An EIS is a tool for decision making. It describes and analyzes the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action and lists one or more alternative actions that could be chosen instead of the proposal. A draft EIS is produced in advance of a final document to allow public review and comment on the proposals and analysis.

Network of Historic Roads, Carriage Roads, and Trails

Goal
Protect the aesthetic and historic values of historic roads, historic carriage roads and trails in the park.
Desired Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The park’s historic road and trail networks retain their overall design, character-defining features, and intended historic uses, including private automobile touring.• The original intent and historic significance of Park Loop Road and other historic roads are conveyed to visitors.• Transportation-related development beyond the existing footprint is minimized and designed in accordance with other rustic designs and is sustainable and adaptive to a changing climate.• Future transportation infrastructure design and construction is sustainable relative to sea level rise, increasing storm intensities, and other climate-related future conditions.• To preserve historic motor roads, the number and size of all vehicles accessing key areas does not exceed the road’s design and parking capacity.• Visitors experience driving the motor roads as originally intended for low speed, vehicle touring.

Cultural Landscapes, Ethnographic Resources and Values

Goal
Protect, preserve, and rehabilitate the cultural landscapes of the park.
Desired Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The historic attributes and uses contributing to the park’s cultural landscapes are preserved and protected.• The character, integrity, and significance of the park’s cultural landscapes are maintained.• The integrity of ethnographic resources and values is safeguarded to preserve significant attributes and uses that contribute to historical significance.• Development blends with and supports the character, integrity, and historic significance embodied in the park’s cultural landscapes, including the historic motor road system.



Mosaic of Habitats Supporting Diverse Flora and Fauna

Goal
Protect and preserve the park’s natural resources, giving priority to those that are exceptionally fragile or significant.
Desired Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A climate-resilient, ecologically diverse native biotic community is present and thriving.• Visitor-related impacts such as loss of soil and vegetation along roadsides from parked cars and along trails from high volumes of hikers are minimized.• An associated abundance of native flora and fauna, including terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, are supported.• The park’s transportation system is designed and constructed to ensure protection of rare and special status species and habitats and to protect habitats from further fragmentation.• Natural processes are safeguarded to preserve natural ecosystem integrity. The natural processes that connect the hydrologic and other natural features and systems of the park are unhindered by transportation-related use, management, and infrastructure.



Purpose and Need for the Acadia National Park Draft Transportation Plan and EIS

The purpose of the transportation plan is to outline a comprehensive approach to providing safe and efficient transportation and a variety of high-quality experiences to visitors in Acadia National Park while ensuring that park resources and values are protected.

The high volumes of visitors accessing popular destinations during peak times are causing gridlock, crowding, emergency response delays, cultural and natural resource damage, safety concerns, and are overwhelming visitor service facilities. Heavy traffic and congestion diminishes the quality of visitor experience during peak times and at popular destinations, creating a demand for parking and road access that exceeds the capabilities of the historic transportation-related infrastructure. Furthermore, modern vehicles too large for the narrow character and alignment of the park’s historic roads leads to unsafe conditions and increased conflicts among user groups, particularly pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers of large vehicles.

Public comments received during initial public scoping in 2015 and during the review of the preliminary concepts in the fall of 2016 demonstrated that there is general consensus across a wide range of stakeholders that actions are needed to address transportation issues and ensure the protection of the park’s fundamental resources and values.

ALTERNATIVES

The National Park Service is required to examine a full range of reasonable alternatives during planning and decisionmaking. Reasonable alternatives propose different ways to fulfill the purpose and need of the plan, while minimizing impacts to the park’s fundamental resources and values. Reasonable alternatives are also economically and technically feasible and evidence common sense.

Within the draft plan the National Park Service has developed four alternative approaches to meet the purpose and need for the transportation plan, protect the park’s fundamental resources and values and achieve desired conditions. The first alternative (alternative A) is the no-action alternative, which reflects a continuation of current management practices within the corridor but does not achieve all of the plan’s desired conditions. The other three alternatives are the action alternatives that represent the diversity of suggestions received from the public and stakeholders during the scoping phases of this plan, as well as feedback from all levels of the National Park Service.


While the action alternatives each represent unique approaches to managing the park’s transportation system, there are many strategies that will not vary by action alternative. These strategies are considered “common to all” and ultimately serve to protect the resources and values of the park.


WHAT IS THE NPS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND HOW WAS IT IDENTIFIED?

Identification of the National Park Service (NPS) preferred alternative for the draft plan involved evaluating the alternatives in a manner that addressed the elements included in NEPA regulations. These elements include:

- Which alternative best meets the purpose and need for taking action?
- Which alternative best meets the NPS statutory mission and responsibility?
- Which alternative best balances environmental impacts and project objectives?
- Which alternative best meets the consideration of technical factors (such as cost and ability to implement a sustainable decision)?
- Which alternative best meets the consideration of other factors (including stakeholder interest)?

Alternative C has been identified as the National Park Service’s preferred alternative . It is important to note that when identifying a preferred alternative, no final action is being taken. The purpose of identifying a preferred alternative is to let the public know which alternative the National Park Service is leaning toward selecting at the time the draft plan is released. Public input is a key element of the NEPA process and the National Park Service wants to solicit and fully consider public feedback on the park’s ideas before an alternative is selected. Ultimately, a different alternative could be selected, or a new alternative representing a different combination of strategies could be developed.

Clean Air and Water

Goal
Maintain or improve air and water quality.
Desired Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation activities and systems would continue to be managed in accordance with the park’s classification as a class I area under the Clean Air Act of 1977.• The physical, chemical, and hydrological properties of the park’s streams, rivers, lakes, and other water bodies reflect natural water quality conditions that meet or exceed applicable water quality standards and drinking water values.

Scenic Resources and Values

Goal
Preserve opportunities for visitors to enjoy the park’s scenery.
Desired Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Views of the natural environmental and cultural landscapes are protected.• Vehicles do not dominate visitor views and experiences at key attractions.• Visitors easily find their destination and understand their options for accessing park features. Visitors have the freedom to roam and explore the surrounding areas, with some areas closed when necessary for resource protection.• Transportation information is available to visitors in multiple formats, including online and at visitor centers.

Summary of the Actions in the Draft Plan

The following serves as a summary of the actions described within the draft plan. For additional detail on these actions, please see chapter 2 of the plan. The impacts from the alternatives are also summarized in the table below. For the complete analysis of impacts please see chapters 3 and 4 of the draft plan.

COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES

Reservation Systems



Each of the action alternatives propose different configurations of reservation systems to manage parking supply and demand. These elements would be common to all these systems.

- A percentage of reservations would be held aside for short-term purchase (i.e., day of, day before, week of). Any advance reservations still available and no-shows would be added to the short-term reservation pool.
- Reservations could be made online and at automated reservation kiosks in key locations.
- Timed-entry reservations (alternatives C and D) would not restrict length of stay, only time of entry. Parking reservations (alternative B) would only be valid for a specified time period and would therefore manage length of stay.
- Reservations would be valid only when accompanied by an entrance pass.
- Operation of the reservation system would be funded through a fee associated with the reservation. The fee or service charge would be tied to the cost of operating the reservation system and supporting visitor access through expanded transit service.
- After initial implementation of the reservation system, the number of reservations, or the length of time a parking reservation is valid, would be adjusted to ensure the highest possible utilization of the existing parking supply while avoiding parking-related congestion and to allow park staff to manage to desired conditions within related thresholds and identified visitor capacities.

Indicators Thresholds and Visitor Capacities



The draft plan identifies visitor capacity and establishes indicators and thresholds using the framework created by the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council. Indicators measure conditions that are related to visitor use, and monitoring is conducted to track those conditions over time. The results of monitoring are used to inform and select strategies to be used by park managers to not exceed the maximum amount of visitor use that can be accommodated for a site (visitor capacity). This iterative practice of monitoring, implementing adaptive strategies, and then continuing to monitor to gauge the effectiveness of those actions allows park managers to maximize benefits for visitors while achieving and maintaining desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences in a dynamic setting.

Public Transit and Commercial Visitor Services



Visitor access to areas on the reservation system would be supplemented through expansions of both commercial and public transit options as well as app-based, on-demand ride services. All commercial vehicles would be required to fit within the existing historic road and bridge geometries as described above.

These services would be expanded, as necessary, up to the determined visitor capacities for specific sites and, as funding permits, to facilitate an alternative means of access for those unable to secure a vehicle reservation during their desired entry time.

Visitor Information, Orientation, and Safety



Increased information would be provided to visitors both before and after they arrive to the park. Mobile, online information, and signage would explain reservation requirements, reservation availability, and information for trip planning and orientation.

The National Park Service would work with cell communication providers and local communities to improve cell service within the park. This will enhance safety, visitor knowledge, and provide for use of app-based, on-demand ride services in the park

Managing Other Mount Desert Island Park Attractions and Trailheads

Unsafe conditions exist at the Acadia Mountain trail head along SR 102 and along Eagle Lake road. At these sites, the park would work with local governments, the Maine Department of Transportation, and other stakeholders to identify alternative, off-highway options for parking. Once alternative parking areas are constructed, park managers would work with the State of Maine to put in place and enforce no-parking restrictions along the shoulders as well as revegetate areas denuded of vegetation.

Acadia National Park would work to develop a memorandum of understanding with state, local, and county departments of transportation and law enforcement officials to improve safety through enforcing roadside parking restrictions near these and other trailheads along state highways and local roads.

At park attractions and trailheads elsewhere on Mount Desert Island, park managers would take more incremental actions, using a series of management options to address existing and anticipated parking-related traffic congestion and unsafe instances of roadside parking. Some of these areas currently experience periodic congestion pressures, but these pressures are likely to change and shift as the National Park Service implements the reservation system and other site improvements described in the alternatives. Several options for managing existing and anticipated parking and congestion have been identified for each of the parking areas. These include both formalizing and prohibiting shoulder parking; removing, expanding, relocating, or developing new parking lots; improving public transit service; adding parking lots to the reservation system; constructing automated gates and adding queuing lanes to manage traffic flow into lots once they are full; and striping informal parking spaces. As implementation of the reservation system begins, park managers would monitor changes to visitor use and traffic patterns and adjust management of these areas as needed, using one or more of the described management options.

Vehicle Size Requirements



To improve safety and preserve the historic character of Park Loop Road, only vehicles that fit the geometry of the road and heights of the bridge underpasses would be permitted. These requirements would be phased in over several years and would vary based on the road geometry and bridge height restrictions of each segment of Park Loop Road and Cadillac Summit Road. Size restrictions already in place for other areas of the park would not change. All requirements would be clearly posted at park entrances, along Park Loop Road, and on the park’s website. Until size requirements are established, oversize vehicles would be required to adhere to site control measures. Passengers of oversized vehicles would have the option of transferring to other means of travel within the park.

Schoodic Transportation Management

Schoodic Peninsula would continue to be managed for a quieter, more contemplative visitor experience than Mount Desert Island. Parking would continue to be allowed in designated areas on a first-come, first-served basis and would not be increased. Parking in informal pullouts would continue to be prohibited. Commercial bus use would also continue to be prohibited. The National Park Service would work to improve safety for those biking the circular route including Schoodic Loop Road and State Route 186, while protecting the historic features of the Schoodic Loop Road. Park managers would work with partners and local communities to provide bike rentals and other appropriate commercially-provided visitor services that help achieve the desired conditions for visitor experience and resource protection in the Schoodic District. An accessible hiking trail would be constructed between Schoodic Education and Research Center campus and Schoodic Point to enhance safety. The overall amount of designated parking in the Schoodic District would not be increased. Any changes to parking lots and parking locations would be made to improve circulation, enhance safety, provide accessible parking, or protect resources rather than to increase the number of parking spaces. Public transit opportunities on the Schoodic Peninsula would remain as they are today, and park managers would continue to support use of the Island Explorer service to access popular destinations.

Adaptive management strategies also would be adopted for the management of private vehicle use, bicycle use, and Island Explorer service. For example, park managers may choose to:

- Deploy additional electronic signs to provide visitors with information on status of parking.
- Work toward increasing the frequency of Island Explorer service in the park and the extent of Island Explorer service in communities near the park.
- Increase enforcement of endorsed parking only.
- Require park and ride/bike from the day-use lot when available parking along Schoodic Loop Road has filled and establish a reservation system to manage vehicle access if the other strategies are not effective in achieving desired conditions.

The Alternatives

	Preferred Alternative			
	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Site Management)	Alternative C (Corridor Management)	Alternative D (System Management)
Application of the Reservation System	All parking would continue to be available to visitors on a first-come, first-served basis. Parking-related congestion would be managed on a case-by-case basis.	<p>Parking-related congestion would be managed by establishing a parking reservation system for vehicles at five of the primary attractions and trailheads along Park Loop Road—Cadillac Mountain summit, Jordan Pond House, Thunder Hole, Sand Beach, and Sieur de Monts. During initial implementation of the plan, all other parking lots would continue to be managed on a first-come, first-served basis.</p> <p>Parking reservations for these five areas would be valid for a specified time period, and vehicles would be required to exit the parking lot prior to the expiration of their permitted time period thereby managing length of stay.</p>	<p>Parking-related traffic congestion on Park Loop Road would be managed by establishing a timed-entry vehicle reservation system only for the Ocean Drive corridor (between the Sand Beach Entrance Station and the Fabbri Picnic Area/Monument), Cadillac Summit Road, and the Jordan Pond House North Lot. During initial implementation of the plan, all other parking lots would continue to be managed on a first-come, first-served basis.</p> <p>The park would use this implementation period to monitor the effectiveness of the reservation system and placement of supporting infrastructure. Based on the results of monitoring traffic and resource conditions, the park may modify the reservation system to ensure desired conditions for traffic and resource conditions are met.</p> <p>The timed-entry system would provide reservation holders with a specific time window during which their vehicle would be permitted to enter the corridor or parking lot. Once inside the corridor or parking lot, there would be no limits on length of stay.</p>	<p>The overall volume and timing of vehicles on Park Loop Road would be managed through consolidating entrance points and implementing a timed-entry reservation system for access onto the entire Park Loop Road. Most of Park Loop Road would be converted to one-way traffic in a counterclockwise rotation. This is opposite the direction of existing one-way sections.</p> <p>Once visitors entered the Park Loop Road during their assigned timed entry window, they would be able to travel freely anywhere on Park Loop Road and all parking would be available on a first-come, first-served basis. There would be no limits on length of stay.</p>
Right Lane Parking	Right-lane parking in designated areas along Park Loop Road would be retained.	All parking in the right-hand lane of Park Loop Road would be eliminated to improve traffic flow and allow passing of bicycles and slow-moving vehicles.	Right-lane parking along Park Loop Road would be retained in the near term but eventually phased out as other options and parking become available.	Right-lane parking along Park Loop Road would be eliminated except for a short northbound section of the road near Sand Beach where a portion of the right lane would be demarcated as parallel parking spaces.
Eagle Lake	The existing parking lot and restroom on the north side of SR 233 at Eagle Lake would remain a first-come, first-served parking lot.	The existing parking lot and restroom on the north side of SR 233 at Eagle Lake would remain a first-come, first-served parking lot with the addition of an automated gate to restrict access when the lot is full. This gate may be modified or replaced to validate reservations if this lot is added to the reservation system.	The existing parking lot and restroom on the north side of SR 233 at Eagle Lake would be removed. These facilities would be relocated to the south (off the highway) at Liscomb Pit, an approximately 2-acre area currently used as a maintenance storage yard.	The existing parking lot and restroom on the north side of SR 233 at Eagle Lake would be removed. These facilities would be relocated to the south (off the highway) along an abandoned section of SR 233 (old route 233).
Hulls Cove Visitor Center Area	No changes would be made to the existing function or footprint of the Hulls Cove area.	Hulls Cove Visitor Center would continue to serve as the primary contact and orientation point for visitors to Acadia National Park. The site would be redeveloped with a substantial expansion of parking capacity and a new and enlarged visitor center. The existing visitor center building would either be repurposed or removed and the area revegetated.	Same as alternative B.	The existing visitor center at Hulls Cove would be demolished and the area restored to natural conditions. A small visitor contact station would be rebuilt closer to an expanded parking lot.
Acadia Gateway Center	The Acadia Gateway Center would be developed as described in the Acadia Gateway Center Environmental Assessment (MDOT and FTA 2006) (see also chapter 1).	Same as alternative A	Same as alternative A	No substantial changes would be made to the planned physical development footprint of the Acadia Gateway Center facility as described in the Acadia Gateway Center environmental assessment (MDOT and FTA 2006) (see also Chapter 1, “Relationship to Other Plans”). However, under this alternative the Acadia Gateway Center would serve as the park’s primary visitor center.
Thompson Island Information Center	No changes would be made to the existing function or footprint of the Thompson Island Information Center.	The visitor services at the Thompson Island Information Center (on the west side of SR 3) would be removed and the structures repurposed. Visitor information services would be relocated to the Acadia Gateway Center. The picnic area and restrooms on the east side of the highway would be maintained for visitor use.	Same as alternative B except all the information center infrastructure on the west side of SR3 would be demolished and the area restored to natural conditions.	Same as alternative B

Environmental Consequences

Implementation of any of the proposed alternatives has the potential to cause impacts to the natural and human environment. Analysis of the draft plan and the issues surrounding it resulted in the identification of impact topics including visitor use and experience, visitor and user safety, historic motor roads, cultural landscapes, and socioeconomics. These topics were considered to be those that could be most impacted by the proposals within the plan.

Impacts can be either positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) and can be direct, indirect, or cumulative (impacts that could be anticipated because of association with other activities outside the scope of the plan); and they vary in intensity, context and duration. Impacts are analyzed in detail within the draft Transportation Plan and are presented below in a simplified table of pros and cons by alternative and associated impact topics.

	Preferred Alternative			
	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Site Management)	Alternative C (Corridor Management)	Alternative D (System Management)
Visitor Use and Experience	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Visitors would still be able to enter the park and destination sites by private vehicle where and when they see fit.– Visitors would still be able to ride Island Explorer and commercial vehicles as an alternate to using a personal vehicle. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Current visitation volumes would result in congestion and a difficult time finding parking during peak season.– Island Explorer would continue to be congested, and demand for services would continue to grow.– Congestion could continue to delay emergency response times on busy days.– Large vehicles would continue to dominate views and obscure scenery at popular locations.	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Visitors would still be able to drive all segments of the Park Loop Road without needing a reservation.– Visitors would be able to obtain reservations for parking lots during their visit.– Visitors with reservations would not be as stressed searching for parking at major destinations.– This alternative has the highest number of visitors who can access the Park Loop Road via private vehicles when compared to the other alternatives.– In most cases, visitors unable to secure a vehicle reservation would still be able to access these sites via public and commercial transportation.– Key visitor attraction sites would be managed to a visitor capacity that would protect high-quality experiences at those locations. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Visitors without parking reservations would not be able to visit major attractions by private vehicle.– Parking lots that are not reservation-based would still be expected to fill early in the day, and competition for parking would remain high.– Visitors with parking reservations may not be able to easily relocate to another area if conditions are unfavorable (i.e., rain, an incident that closes access to the lot).– Unmanaged roadway corridors may see an increased number of private vehicles and longer drive times, which would increase congestion along scenic corridors.	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Visitors without a reservation would still be able to drive most segments of Park Loop Road.– An expanded parking lot at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center would allow more visitors to transfer to Island Explorer to maintain access to park sites, even without reservations.– Expanded parking at Acadia Mountain and relocated parking at Eagle Lake would allow more people to safely access the nearby trails without parking along high speed roadways.– This alternative has the middle number of visitors who can access the Park Loop Road via private vehicles when compared to the other alternatives.– In most cases, visitors unable to secure a vehicle reservation would still be able to access these sites via public and commercial transportation.– Key visitor attraction sites would be managed to a visitor capacity that would ensure protection of high-quality experiences at those locations. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Finding parking at other individual lots off managed corridors will still be difficult as people without reservations may fill them faster.– Visitors in private vehicles might have a difficult time relocating to other destinations if conditions are unfavorable at reservation sites (i.e., because of weather or other impacts).– Congestion could still occur along roadways and lots not on the reservation system. This could limit access to those areas during peak times.	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Those visitors who are able to obtain access to Park Loop Road would benefit from a high-quality experience, free of extended and systematic traffic jams.– Visitors who obtain reservations would have a lot of flexibility once they arrive within the Park Loop Road.– Key visitor attraction sites would be managed to a visitor capacity that would ensure protection of high-quality experiences at those locations. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Because access is uncontrolled within the Park Loop Road system once a reservation is obtained, finding parking at popular destinations might still be challenging.– Reducing the number of entry points could cause delays at entrances.– The new counterclockwise pattern may be confusing to visitors at first.– This alternative has the lowest number of visitors who can access the Park Loop Road via private vehicles when compared to the other alternatives. However, in most cases, visitors unable to secure a vehicle reservation would still be able to access via public and commercial transportation.
Cultural Landscapes	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– The park would continue to follow existing preservation guidelines for protecting the cultural landscapes and address issues as they arise with available funding. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Physical conditions are expected to deteriorate with increased visitation and congestion as a result of increased social trailing, out of bounds parking, and vegetation trampling.	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Removing right-lane parking would reduce social trails leading to parking areas and through cultural landscapes.– Limiting number of vehicles that can go into parking lots at designated cultural landscapes and Cadillac Summit Road reduces crowding and congestion in the lots and reduces instances of off-road parking, protecting their historic character. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Cars queuing to enter gated landscapes disrupt views from and into the historic scenes.– Adding modern signs and gates to landscapes alters their historic design (though they can be designed to match historic characteristics).	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Phasing out of right-lane parking would reduce social trails leading to parking areas and through cultural landscapes. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Parking lot construction at Jordan Pond House would alter viewsheds and reduce greenspace within the historic landscape design.– Modern gates installed at Cadillac Mountain Summit Road and Jordan Pond House would detract from the appearance of historic landscapes, though they would be designed to minimize that impact.– New signage necessary to alert drivers to reservation-only areas would clutter landscapes and views into and out of sites and along the road, though they would be designed to minimize that impact.	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Elimination of most right-lane parking would reduce social trails into landscapes.– Because of systemwide management, this alternative requires few modern gates to be installed along the road and at landscape entrances. In addition, there would be no queuing of vehicles entering landscapes and no subsequent impacts to viewsheds into and out of the sites.

		Preferred Alternative		
	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Site Management)	Alternative C (Corridor Management)	Alternative D (System Management)
Visitor and User Safety	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where right-lane parking is prohibited, one-way sections of roadway provide safe space for passing vehicles and bicyclists. Maintaining one-way sections of roadway would allow continued safer operation of buses and RVs. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congestion on roadways under current conditions can mean that emergency response times are delayed during busy days (primarily on Ocean Drive and Cadillac Summit Road). Some road segments are not designed for safe use by larger vehicles such as coach buses, especially when passing bicyclists. 	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reductions in vehicle size would reduce the number of instances where vehicles need to cross the centerline, increasing safety along roadways. Overall reductions in vehicle volumes on Cadillac Summit Road (resulting from the managed access actions in this alternative) would reduce the likelihood of vehicle conflicts. Removal of right-lane parking in some areas would increase the size and number of passing areas for bicyclists and reduce the possibility of vehicle-pedestrian conflicts and increase the perceived safety of bicyclists. 	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as alternative B, plus, Elimination of roadside parking at Eagle Lake and other locations would improve visitor safety along this section of road for both pedestrians and bicyclists accessing historic carriage roads. The eventual elimination of right lane parking on the Park Loop Road would reduce the potential for vehicle/bicycle/pedestrian conflicts. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In locations where right lane parking is temporarily retained, the potential for vehicle/bicycle/pedestrian conflicts would persist. Managed vehicle access to corridors could increase the number of people who walk-in or bicycle in, which could increase bicycle/pedestrian/vehicle conflicts along roadways. 	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as alternative B Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as alternative C
	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Park Service would continue to follow existing preservation guidelines for protecting the historic roads and address issues as they arise with available funding. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical conditions of the roads are expected to deteriorate with increased visitation and congestion. There would be continued impacts to historic fabric and historic character from oversized vehicles and the use of the right lane for parking, which was not envisioned in the historic design of the road. Signs, modified lane striping, expansion of right-lane parking, and use of historic pullouts for long-term parking would continue to have negative effects on the historic character of the roads. 	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating right-lane parking would restore an aspect of the historic character of the road and reduce instances of damage to historic fabric from shoulder parking. Limiting size of vehicles to those that fit road geometries restores historic character by opening views and protects historic road fabric by reducing potential damage from off tracking and impacts with historic bridges. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congestion and its impacts on historic character on the historic road could continue, as reservations only control access to parking lots, not the historic corridor. Addition of gates at parking lots along the road introduce modern features to the historic setting (though they can be designed to match their surroundings). 	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limiting size of vehicles to those that fit road geometries restores historic character by opening views and protects historic road fabric by reducing potential damage from off tracking and impacts with historic bridges. Phasing out right-lane parking would restore an aspect of the historic character of the road and reduce instances of damage to historic fabric from shoulder parking. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For visitors unable to obtain reservations, segmenting the historic Park Loop Road (via the reservation requirements for portions of the road) creates a broken driving experience that is in opposition to the historic character and design intent of the road. The addition of modern signage and gates to manage access to the reservation corridor would have a negative effect on the historic character of the road, though they would be designed to minimize that impact. The adaptive management component of this alternative could allow for additional gates and signs to be installed if more corridors are added to the reservation system, leading to more impacts to the road’s historic character. Lane-shifting and parallel parking striping associated with the formalization of right-lane parking changes the historic character of the road. These impacts are temporary as right-lane parking would eventually be phased out. 	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System-wide management of the road allows visitors to drive Park Loop Road in the free-flowing and unobstructed manner imagined by Rockefeller and Olmsted in their initial designs. Removal of the existing modern entrance station at Sand Beach would restore historic character. Limiting vehicle size to the geometry of the road opens up vistas that large vehicles block and would protect historic fabric from damage. Eliminating most right-lane parking would restore the historic design intent of the road and improve designed viewsheds. Because of full system management, this alternative requires the fewest modern gates to be installed and allows management of congestion within the entire loop system, improving the historic character of the roads. Because overcrowding of the entire system is controlled, existing modern traffic control features, such as parking management stones, could be removed, restoring historic character. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reversing the direction of the road to counterclockwise would alter the historic two way traffic design of the Park Loop Road, though much of the road is already managed in a one-way pattern. Installing new entrance stations would add modern features to the historic road, but the impact would be partially mitigated by using NPS Rustic Design. Permanent demarcation of right-lane parking near Sand Beach would have negative impacts to the historic character of the road. Iconic views of Otter Cliffs and Bubble Rock would be lost by changing to a counterclockwise direction. Modern facilities at Jackson Lab would become more visible with a counterclockwise vehicle direction. Previous studies have shown that clockwise travel on the Park Loop Road provided more of the historically designed views than counterclockwise traffic flow.

		Preferred Alternative		
	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Site Management)	Alternative C (Corridor Management)	Alternative D (System Management)
Socioeconomics	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Contributions to the local and regional economies that result from park visitation would continue to be beneficial. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Increasing crowding in the park might lead to negative visitor experiences discouraging return visits and resulting in decreased visitor-related spending in the local and regional economy.Mount Desert Island residents would continue to experience a degraded quality of life associated with high traffic volumes and road congestion, crowded pedestrian conditions within the village and longer commuting times during the park’s peak seasons.Mount Desert Island residents could experience increased crowding and longer delays when using Island Explorer bus service.	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none">By providing the highest level of private vehicle access to primary park attractions, alternative B has highest potential to maintain or expand the local and regional economic tourism economy compared to the other alternatives.Visitors unable to secure private vehicle reservations on their preferred days of travel might rely on other commercial transit systems (i.e., Island Explorer, road-based commercial tours, and/or app-based, on-demand rides), resulting in increased spending within the local and regional economy.The establishment of a reservation system for parking would help smooth spikes in visitation over the peak season, allowing communities and businesses to reap the benefits of tourism while addressing some of the current congestion, crowding and safety concerns.Enhancement of visitor experience under this alternative associated with assurances of parking access at the reservation lots and the elimination of right-lane parking would encourage future visits and contributions to the local and regional economy.A 2- to 3-year-long construction period associated with the rehabilitation of Hulls Cove Visitor Center, the new Acadia Gateway Center, and gates and signage would be beneficial to local construction trades, vendors, and suppliers. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Until alternative parking options at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center and the Acadia Gateway center are developed, removing right-lane parking may displace vehicles to other areas of Mount Desert Island, aggravating local concerns with parking in Bar Harbor and traffic problems in and around the park.	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Alternative C would result in long-term beneficial impacts on the local and regional tourism economy by balancing visitor access, improving visitor experience, and protecting park resources that draw visitors to the region.Visitors unable to secure private vehicle reservations on their preferred days of travel may rely on other commercial transit systems, resulting in increased spending within the local and regional economy.The establishment of a reservation system for accessing key corridors of the park would help smooth spikes in visitation over the peak season, allowing communities and businesses to reap the benefits of tourism while addressing some of the current congestion, crowding, and safety concerns.The construction of new parking lots such as at Eagle Lake, Liscomb Pit, and Acadia Mountain with associated new trail connections would support enhanced visitor access at destinations outside the reservation system.A 2- to 3-year-long construction period at a new and enlarged visitor center and parking lot at Hulls Cove, expansion of parking lots, and gate and signage improvements would be beneficial to local construction trades, vendors, and suppliers.	Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Visitors unable to secure private vehicle reservations on their preferred days of travel may rely on other commercial transit systems, resulting in increased spending within the local and regional economy.The establishment of a reservation system for accessing the Park Loop Road would help to smooth spikes in visitation over the peak season, allowing communities and businesses to reap the benefits of tourism while addressing some of the current congestion, crowding, and safety concerns.New parking areas at Eagle Lake and Satterlee pit would accommodate vehicles currently parked on roadsides and would provide access to Sand Beach, with or without a reservation, benefiting visitor experience and increasing the likelihood for repeat visits and contributions to the local economy.Visitors who obtain reservations for private vehicle access would have high-quality experiences with more options for spontaneity within their visit and assurances of minimal congestion, leading to more likelihood for greater satisfaction and repeat visits.Future construction expenditures associated with improvements at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center area, road widening, parking lot improvements, new entrance stations, as well as the gate and signage improvements associated with the reservation system would be beneficial to local construction trades, vendors, and suppliers. Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none">By providing the lowest level of private vehicle access to primary park attractions, alternative D may result in adverse economic impacts on the local tourism industry and associated service-related businesses if visitors choose not to use public or commercial transit options instead of private vehicles and thus choose not to visit.

Acadia National Park

Alternative C: Preferred Alternative

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

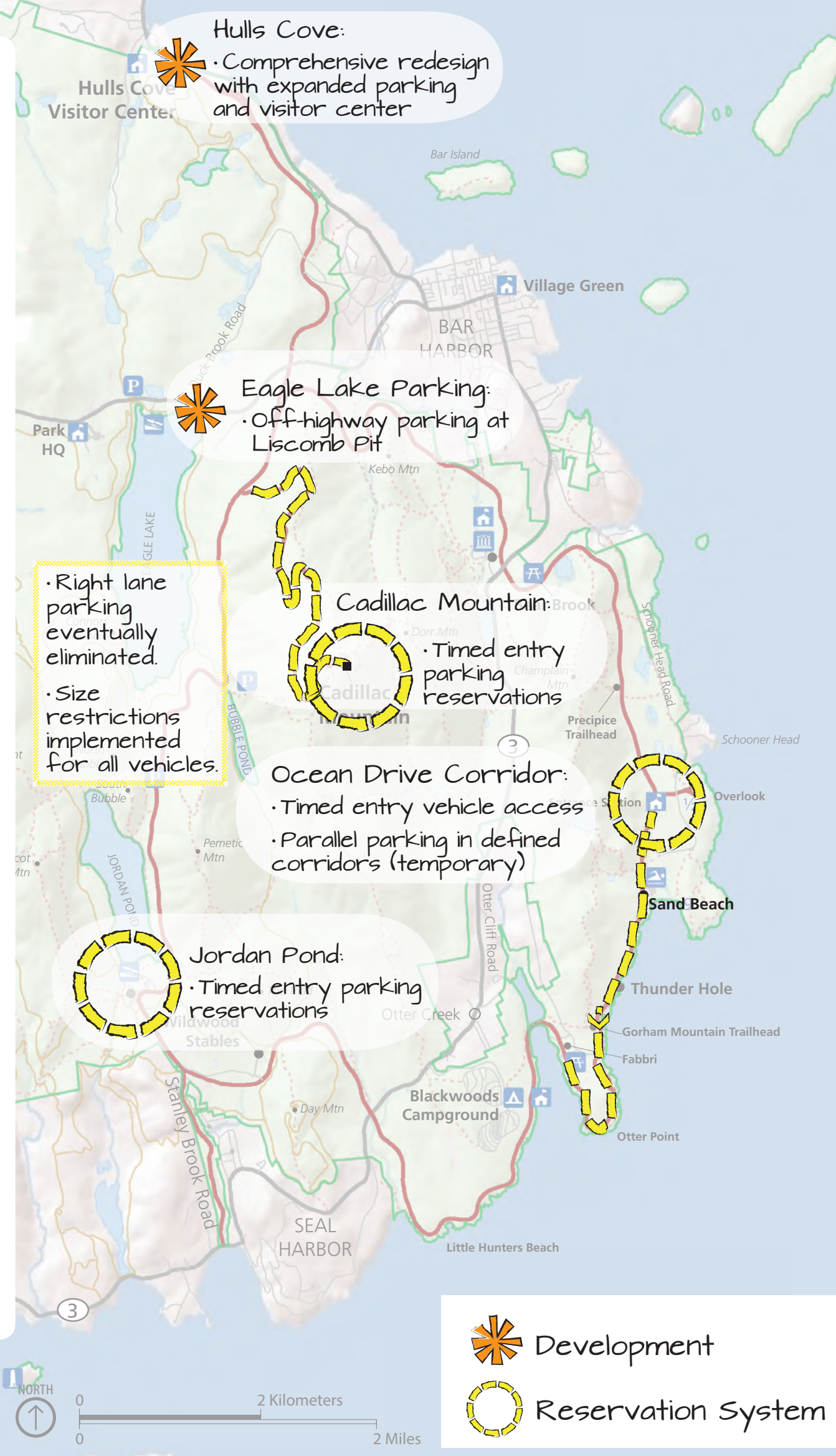


Summary

This alternative improves visitor experiences and reduces congestion by providing visitors with a choice in options to visit Acadia National Park during peak season. Private vehicles could access Ocean Drive, Cadillac Mountain, and Jordan Pond with a parking reservation, and other destinations in the park without parking reservations. Visitors could also ride an expanded network of commercial tour and Island Explorer buses or use an on-demand private taxi.

Key Elements

- During peak use times, access to Ocean Drive, the Cadillac Mountain Summit Road, and parking at the Jordan Pond by private vehicles would be managed through a timed entry reservation system to ensure free flowing roadway conditions and adequate parking availability for visitors.
- A comprehensive redesign and parking expansion of the visitor infrastructure at Hulls Cove would allow the area to function as a park and ride and significantly improve visitor orientation and accessibility. This action, combined with the final build-out of the Acadia Gateway Center will allow for expanded Island Explorer transit service and commercial tours.
- Commercial tour vehicle access to Park Loop Road and Cadillac Mountain would be managed through concessions contracts. In addition, the park would partner with on demand transportation services to allow visitors to access key destinations without requiring a parking space.
- Right lane parking on some one-way sections of Park Loop Road would be striped to improve traffic flows and parking efficiency. This would be phased out as additional parking is added outside the reservation area.
- Roadside parking near the Eagle Lake and Acadia Mountain trail heads would be replaced with off-highway parking areas.
- The park would continue to support the planned development of the Acadia Gateway Center.
- The visitor information center infrastructure on the west side of SR3 would be demolished and the area restored to natural conditions.

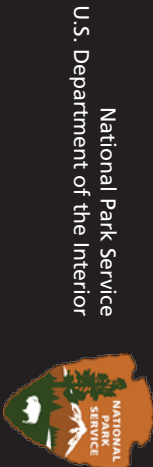


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ACADIA NATIONAL PARK
ATTN: TRANSPORTATION PLAN
PO BOX 177
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OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300



Acadia National Park
Maine



Acadia National Park Transportation Plan – Draft Environmental Impact Statement Newsletter



PLANNING SCHEDULE

Milestone	Completion Date	Public Input
Public scoping	Summer 2015	Thank you for your input!
Analyze public comments and develop a range of preliminary alternatives		
Public review of the range of preliminary management concepts	Fall 2016	Review the preliminary concepts newsletter, attend the open house, and provide your comments.
Analyze public comments and prepare the draft plan/EIS		
Public review of the draft plan/EIS	Spring 2018	Review the draft plan, attend the open house event, and provide your comments.
Analyze public comments and prepare the final plan/EIS		
Release final plan/EIS and prepare the Record of Decision	Fall 2018	Stay up-to-date on the planning process by visiting the website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ACADPlan .

NEXT STEPS

The planning team will analyze public comments on the draft Transportation Plan to identify necessary refinements and prepare the final plan/EIS. Ultimately, a different alternative could be selected, or a new alternative representing a different combination of strategies could be developed in the Final Plan/EIS. Public input is a key consideration in making those refinements.

The National Park Service expects to release the Final EIS and Record of Decision in the fall of 2018. Implementation of the plan can only begin after the Record of Decision is signed by the National Park Service Northeast Regional Director.



Thank you for your interest in the Acadia National Park Transportation Plan!