

Antietam National Battlefield

Maryland

November 2016

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Visitor Access and Circulation Plan

Scoping Newsletter

Dear Friends of Antietam National Battlefield,

The National Park Service is initiating a planning process to develop strategies for improving visitor access and circulation at Antietam National Battlefield through the development of a Visitor Access and Circulation Plan / Environmental Assessment (Plan).

In 1992 Antietam National Battlefield (Park) approved a General Management Plan (GMP) to guide the management and planning for the future of the park. Since that time many of the objectives outlined in the GMP have been accomplished, new lands have been added to the park, and our understanding of the battle and its legacy has grown. The Antietam National Battlefield Visitor Access and Circulation Plan now under consideration will integrate lands and resources that have been added to the park into visitor circulation patterns and experiences. It will also serve as an amendment to the general management plan concerning key elements of visitor circulation including the existing visitor center area, trails, park roads, and interpretive sign systems.

Your input and participation is essential to the success of this process and will help guide the development of the plan. On November 17, 2016, the park will hold an open house to discuss current challenges and opportunities for enhanced public access and circulation and to hear feedback from the public on initial concepts. I invite you to attend this open house or to provide your feedback to key questions posted online at the project website:

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

If you would like to learn more about the upcoming planning process or have any questions regarding this effort, please feel free to contact me at any time. I appreciate your interest in Antietam National Battlefield and look forward to your participation in charting the future of this significant place!

Susan Trail,
Superintendent



PURPOSE & NEED

This plan will provide long-term direction for improving visitor circulation, safety, and access to key areas of Antietam National Battlefield, including recently acquired lands within the park boundary, for the purpose of enhancing the park visitors' overall experience and understanding of the Battle of Antietam and its legacy.

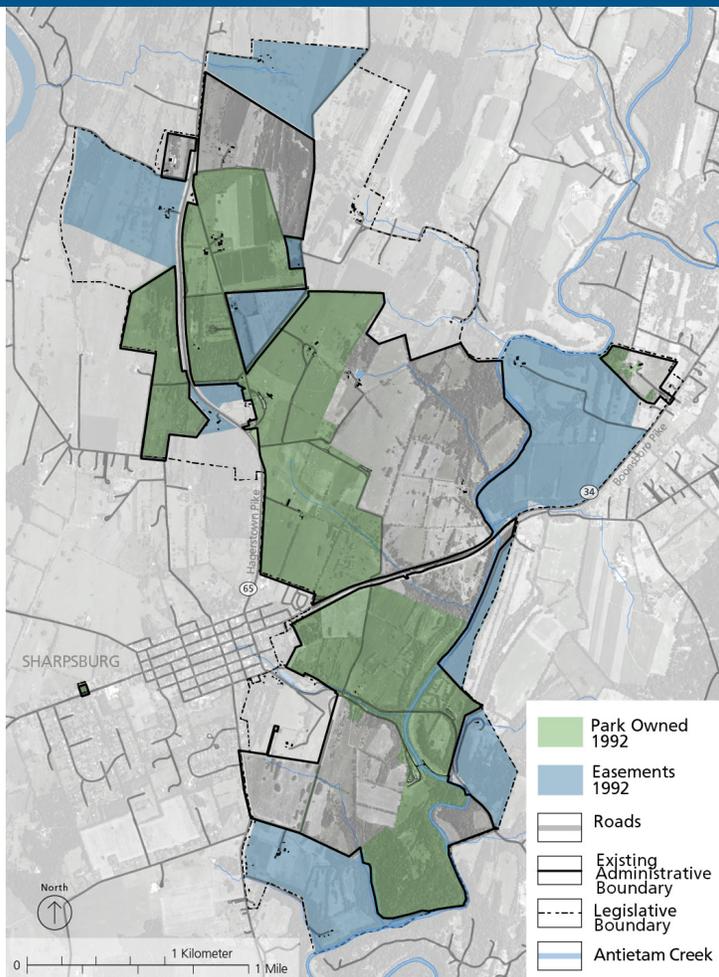
As identified in the park's 2013 Foundation Document, the purpose of Antietam National Battlefield is:

The purpose of Antietam National Battlefield is to preserve, protect, restore, and interpret for the benefit of the public the resources associated with the Battle of Antietam and its legacy.

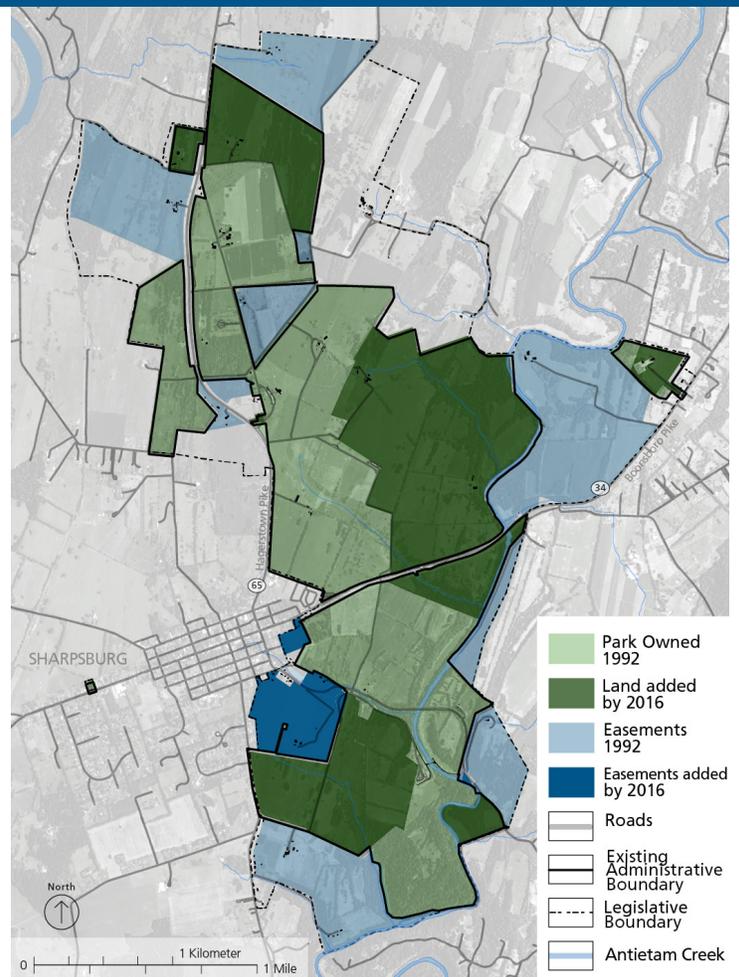
To meet this park purpose, Antietam National Battlefield must ensure that areas key to the park's interpretation of the Battle of Antietam are accessible to visitors, and in a manner that also protects and preserves significant historic resources associated with the Battle of Antietam and its legacy.

A visitor access and circulation plan is needed for several reasons. First, the park aims to provide visitors with high-quality orientation, interpretation, and engagement with the significance of the Battle of Antietam and the fundamental resources and values associated with the battle and its legacy. However, current access and interpretation may not meet the needs of a wide range of park visitors. Issues with the park's visitor circulation patterns and visitor services and orientation around the visitor center were first noted as a key issue in the park's 1992 General Management Plan. Park infrastructure, such as sidewalks, parking lots, and signage, does not meet current laws, policy, and guidelines for accessibility. Moreover, park lands acquired by the National Park Service since the park's general management plan include key areas of the 1862 battlefield that need to be integrated into the park's overall interpretive program to benefit visitor understanding of significant events about the Battle of Antietam and its legacy.

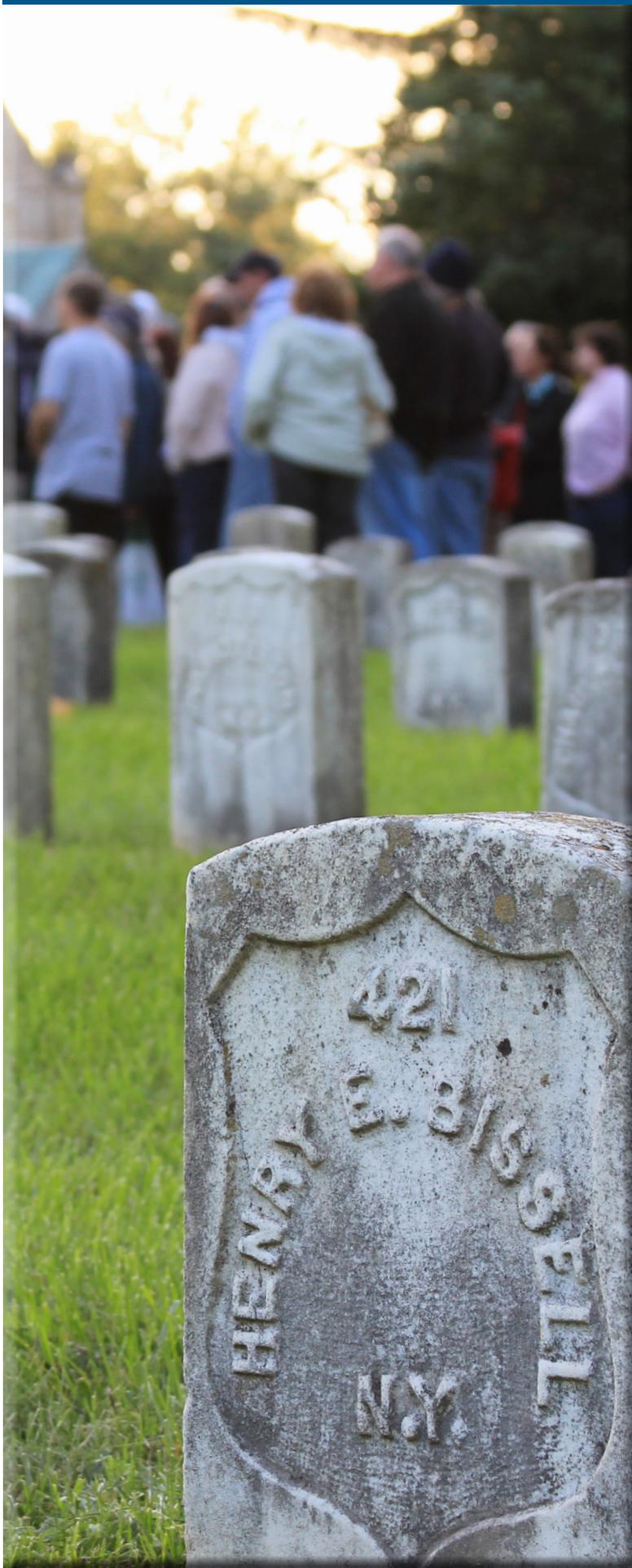
The Visitor Access and Circulation Plan will revisit and amend certain elements identified in the 1992 General Management Plan concerning the scope of changes proposed for the park's existing visitor center and the commemorative-era tour roads, both of which contribute to the park's historical significance and are considered a fundamental part of the commemorative landscape.



1992 – Lands Owned By Antietam National Battlefield



2016 – Lands Owned By Antietam National Battlefield



HOW TO PARTICIPATE

The National Park Service invites you to play a role in this planning process. To share your thoughts on visitor access and circulation planning throughout the park:

1) Participate in our public open house:

The park invites you to attend an open house to hear more information about this visitor access and circulation planning effort, ask questions, and provide your comments to NPS Planners.

When: November 17, 2016

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
(presentations will start at 6:30 p.m.
and be repeated at 7:30 p.m.)

Where: Antietam National Battlefield
Visitor Center
5831 Dunker Church Rd
Sharpsburg, MD 21782

For further information or if you have special needs to be accommodated during this public open house, please contact Justin Henderson at 303-969-2540.

2) Visit our project website to submit your comments online:

You may also submit your feedback and responses to the key project questions on the project website at:

[https://parkplanning.nps.gov/
ANTICirculationPlanComment](https://parkplanning.nps.gov/ANTICirculationPlanComment)

Your comments will be most useful if received before **December 9, 2016.**

Please Note: Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.





OBJECTIVES

The outcome of this visitor access and circulation planning process will be a long-term plan that will set priorities for

- 1) site improvements that will establish access to park areas important to the interpretation of the battlefield, its legacy, and other key park resources
- 2) site improvements that will enhance visitor orientation, circulation, safety, and accessibility throughout the park
- 3) a conceptual framework for integrating newly acquired lands into the park's interpretative and circulation program
- 4) Ensure that any actions set forth in the plan support continued protection and preservation of battlefield resources

Engaging stakeholders and the public in exploring both challenges and opportunities associated with visitor access and circulation at the park is an important step in this planning process.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Known as the “bloodiest one-day battle in American history,” Antietam National Battlefield is the site where 23,000 Union and Confederate soldiers were killed, wounded, or missing after twelve hours of savage combat on September 17, 1862. A defining moment in the American Civil War, the Battle of Antietam ended the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia’s first invasion into the North and provided President Abraham Lincoln the opportunity to issue the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

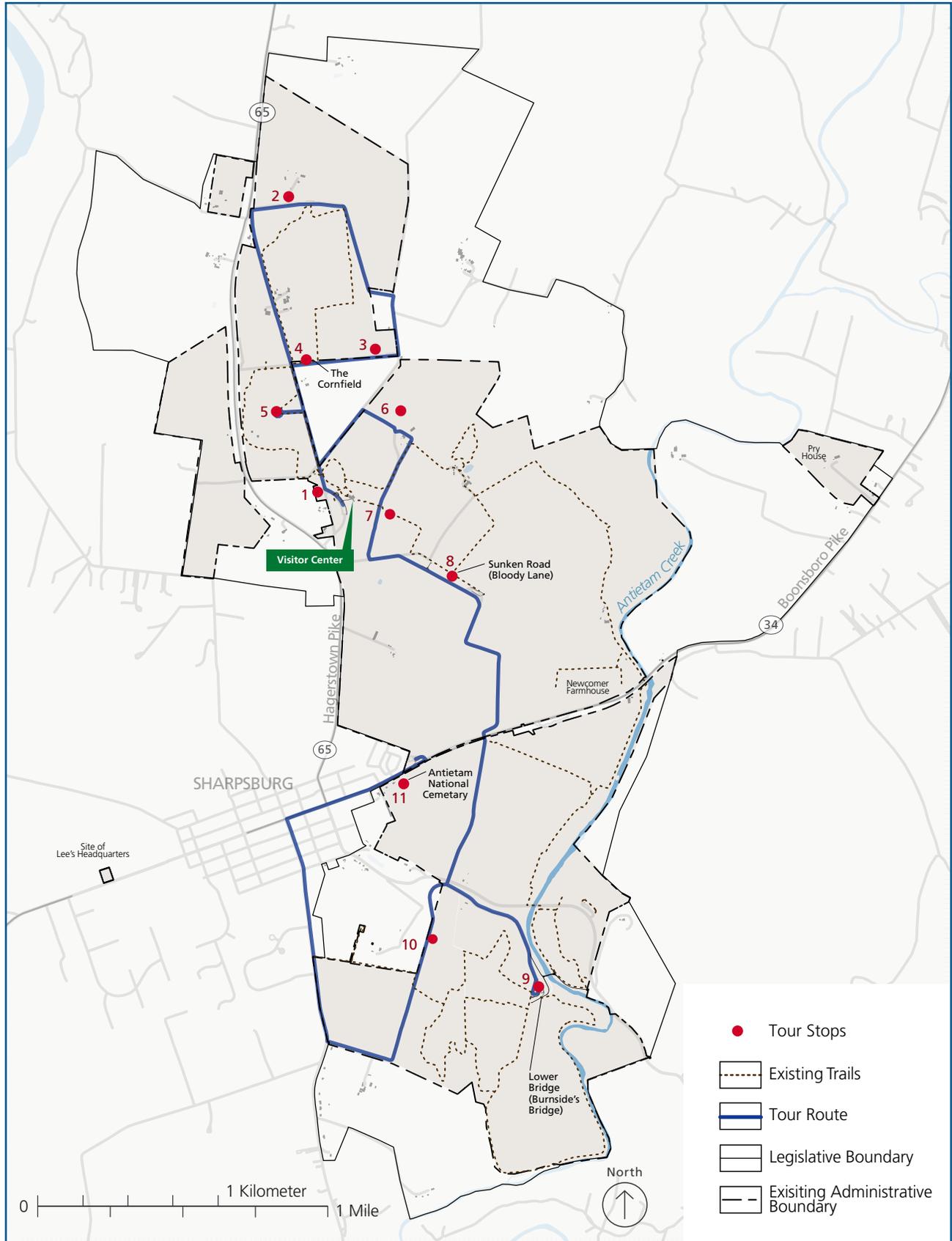
Today, farmlands in and around Antietam National Battlefield appear much as they did on the eve of the battle in September 1862. An 11-stop automobile tour and over twelve miles of trails take visitors through areas of historical interest, including tracing troop movements, interpreting battle tactics and military strategy, and relating human interest stories surrounding the events of the battlefield. Additional interpretation of the stories, people, and places is provided at the park visitor center.

ISSUES

Identified issues related to visitor access and circulation that this plan hopes to address include:

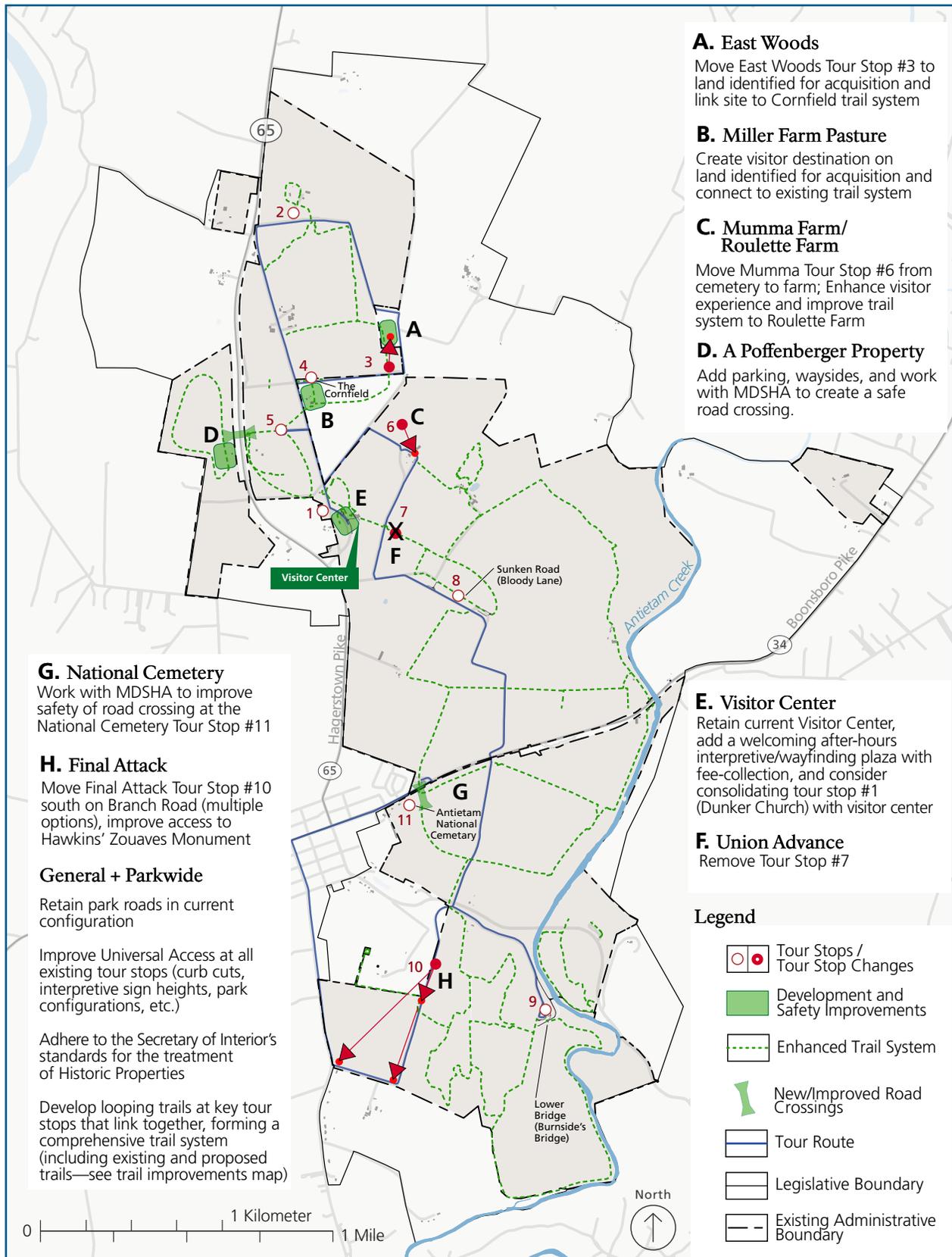
- Limited access to recently acquired lands within the park.
- Limitations of visitor orientation around the visitor center, especially after regular business hours.
- Public safety concerns related to: the location of park trails on or near roads, road crossings, trails on or near fields in agricultural production.
- Lack of Universal Access (Architectural Barriers Act ABA) at auto tour road stops in the park.
- Appropriate use and level of access to historic structures.

MAP OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



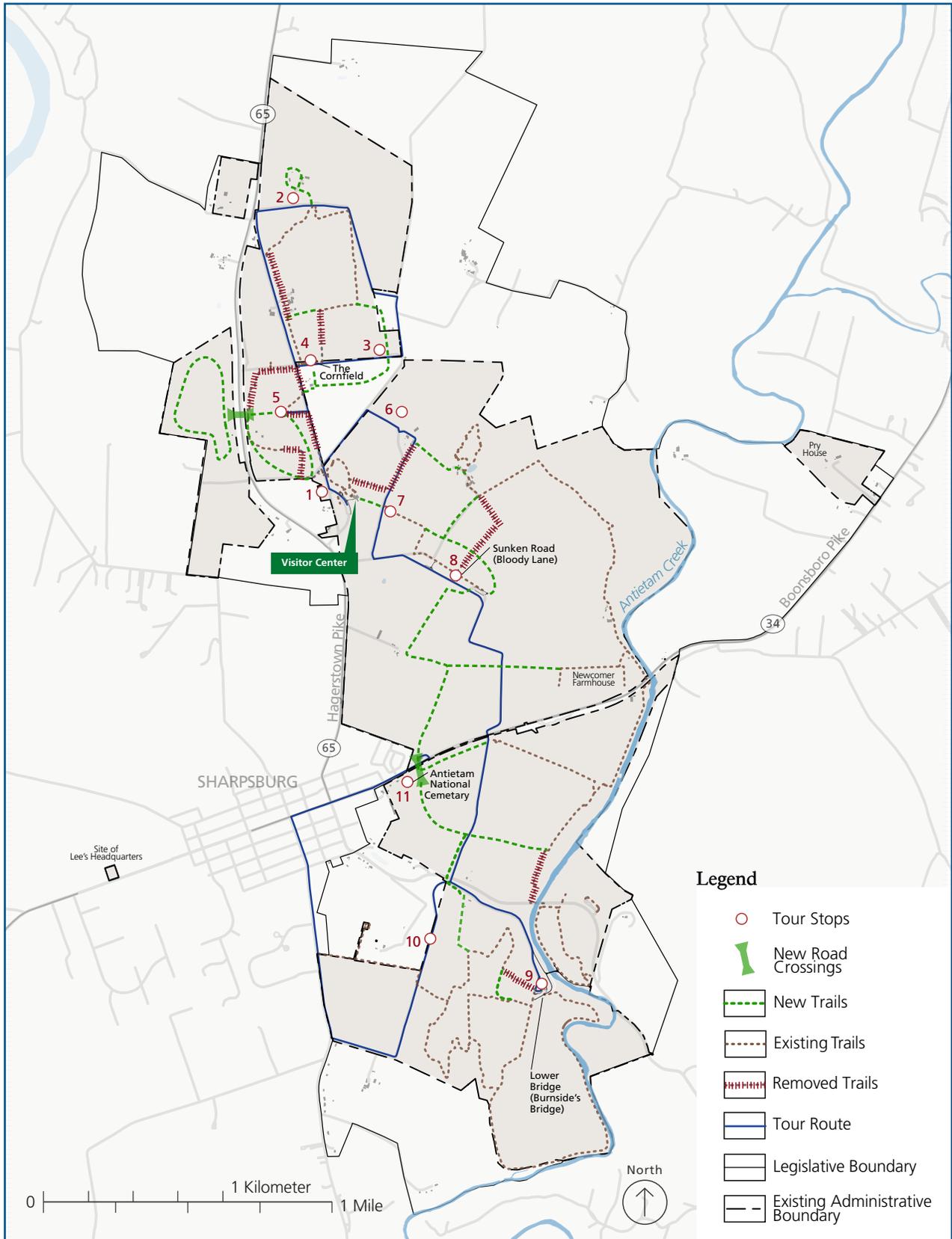
PRELIMINARY ACTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Preliminary alternative actions were identified and developed during the EA internal scoping planning process, taking into consideration known issues and past and present planning efforts. These preliminary actions are outlined on the maps below and will be further developed and refined with ideas that are collected during the public comment period. We want your input regarding these proposed actions and alternatives.



TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS UNDER CONSIDERATION

This plan will also identify changes needed to the trail system at the park. During the internal scoping process, many ideas for trail changes were proposed. These proposed actions related to trails in the park are outlined on the maps below and will be further developed and refined with ideas that are collected during the public comment period. We want your input regarding these proposed actions and improvements to the trail system in the park.



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Planning Activity	Approximate Timeframe
Project Initiated Data Collection Internal Scoping Public Scoping (We are Here)	Summer/Fall 2016
Evaluate Public Comments Analysis of Environmental Impacts Develop Draft Plan	Winter 2016/2017
Agency Review of Draft Plan Revise Draft Plan Approval of Plan	Spring/Summer 2017
Final Plan Posted of Public Review NPS Decision Document Project Completed	Fall 2017

NEXT STEPS

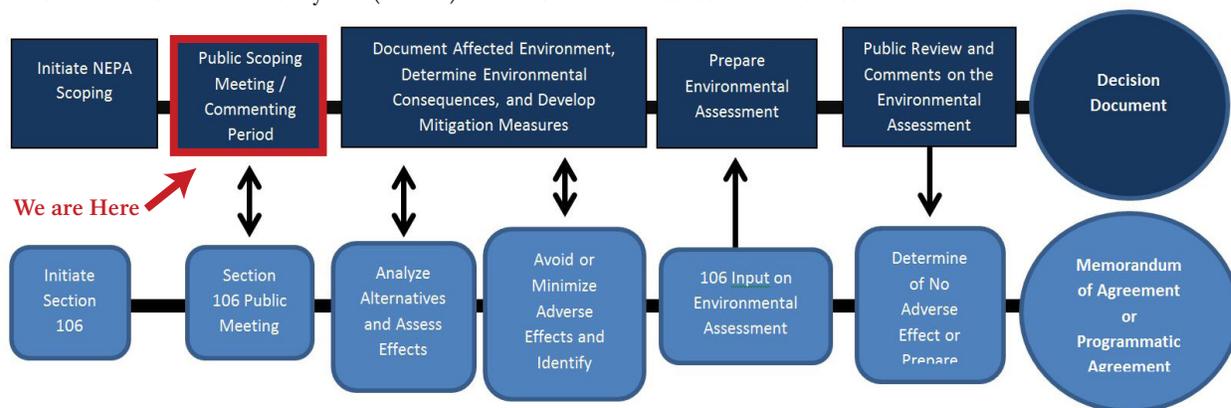
After public comments are received, the NPS planning team will use this information and feedback to develop and refine planning alternatives. These alternatives will be analyzed to determine the most effective and efficient alternative that will provide the greatest opportunities for visitor access while balancing the stewardship goals of the park and meeting the objectives of the visitor access and circulation plan.

THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), requires all federal agencies to consider and document the potential impacts of management actions on the human environment. The National Park Service (NPS) applies NEPA in the planning process to evaluate alternative courses of action and impacts so decisions are made in accord with the conservation and preservation mandate of the NPS Organic Act of 1916. The NPS utilizes Director's Order 12, Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making (DO-12), and accompanying DO-12 Handbook to define the steps within the NEPA process (see below) for each specific project and outlines the necessary requirements and contents for environmental document preparation.

In accordance with NEPA, the National Park Service will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate the proposed actions identified in this plan. The environmental assessment will address the project background, the purpose and need for the proposed actions, a determination of environmental issues and potential impacts resulting from the alternatives considered (including the no-action alternative), and public involvement and agency coordination. Concurrent to the NEPA process, the National Park Service will conduct consultation under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - Environmental Assessment Process



National Historic Preservation Act - Section 106 Process