

GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT

WELCOME

The presentation will begin at 6:00pm



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TOP: Sunset over the Dunes. BOTTOM: Sun and shadow patterns on the Dunes
(NPS/Patrick Myers)

WELCOME



Snow Patches on the Dunes. (NPS/Patrick Myers)



Overview of Medano Creek and children playing. (NPS/Patrick Myers)



Prairie sunflowers, Dunes, and Crestone Peaks. (NPS/Patrick Myers)

BACKGROUND

Increase in visitation due to:

- Park designation in 2004
- The National Parks Centennial Celebration
- Pandemic in 2020

Increased visitation has impacted natural and cultural resources, visitor experience and mobility, safety, and park facilities and operations.

The peak visitation season (May through August) sees approximately 70% of all Park visitation annually with current trends showing steady visitation increases during shoulder season weekends through October.



Visitors access Medano Creek and the Dunes from one of three main trails.

PREVIOUS EFFORTS

Studies and Assessments

- 2017 Congestion Assessment
- 2017 Road Inventory and Condition Assessment of Paved Routes
- 2020 Preliminary Project Planning Completion Report
- 2020 System Usage Analysis
- 2021 Frontcountry Visitor Use Management Evaluation
- 2022 Visitor Use and Preference Study



Gold cottonwood trees on Medano Creek below the Great Sand Dunes.
(NPS/Patrick Myers)

TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT PLAN

Purpose: To provide a series of concepts to address the challenges presented by increased use and changing visitor use patterns. These concepts explore frontcountry motorized and nonmotorized solutions.

THE FRONTCOUNTRY

Key Locations

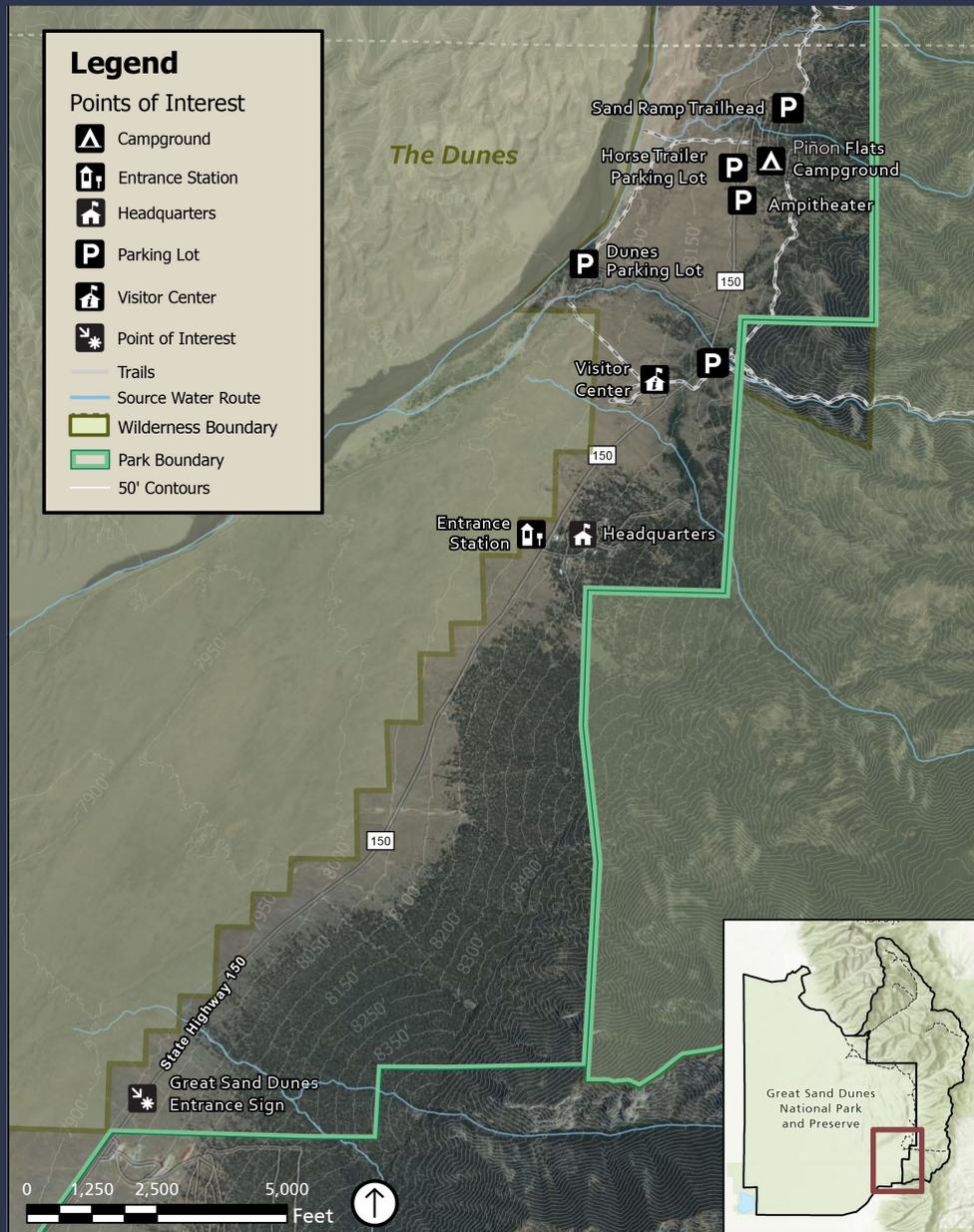
- Entrance Sign
- Park Entrance Road (Hwy 150)
- Entrance Station
- Dunes Parking Lot and Medano Creek Road
- Horse Trailer Parking Lot
- Amphitheater



Amphitheater Parking Lot.



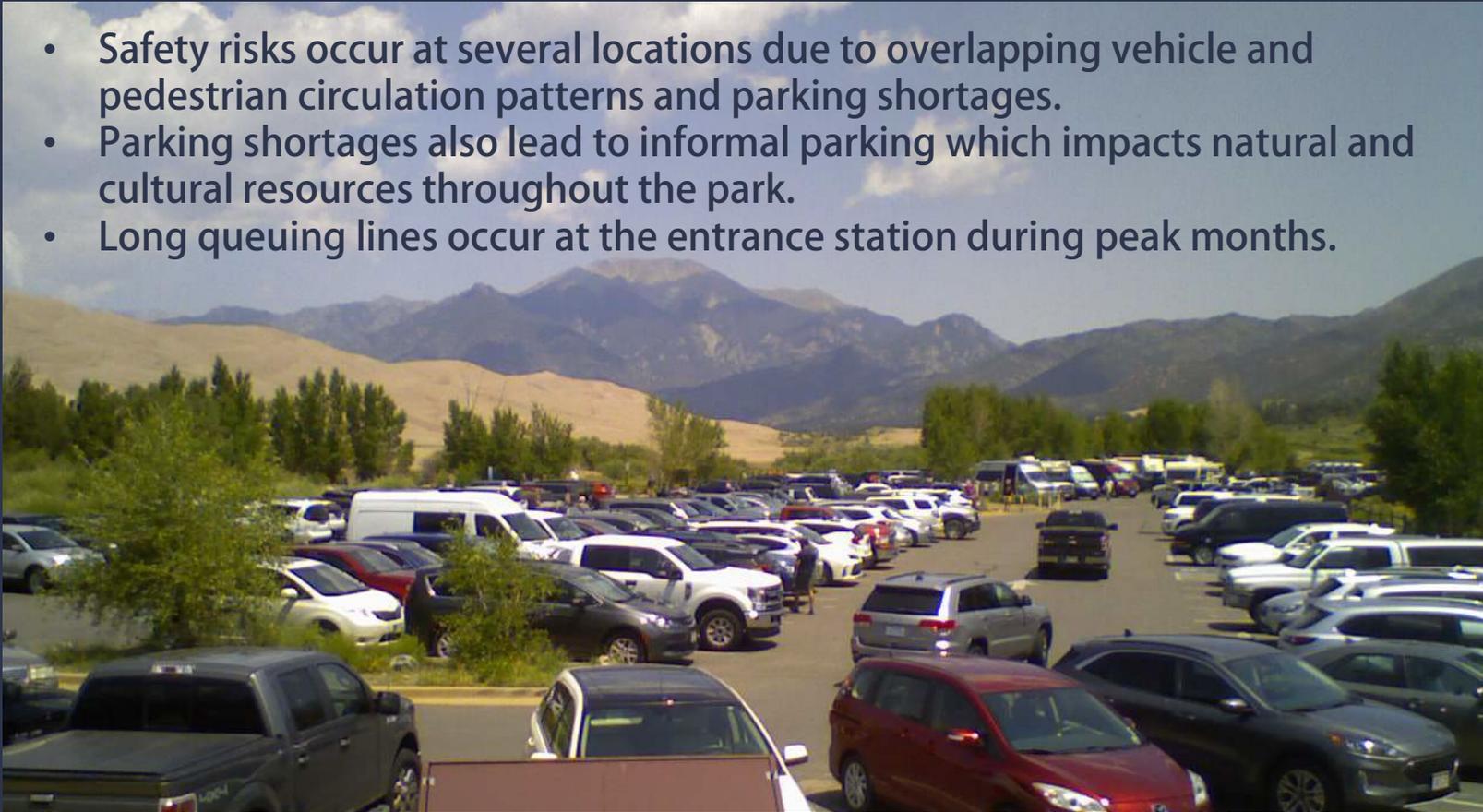
Gold cottonwood trees along Medano Creek.
(NPS/Patrick Myers)



EXISTING CONDITIONS

KEY FINDINGS

- Safety risks occur at several locations due to overlapping vehicle and pedestrian circulation patterns and parking shortages.
- Parking shortages also lead to informal parking which impacts natural and cultural resources throughout the park.
- Long queuing lines occur at the entrance station during peak months.



View of the Dunes Parking Lot during peak season.



Visitors frequently walk along Medano Creek Road and the park entrance road to access the Dunes. (NPS Photo)



During peak visitation, parking occurs in designated spaces on Medano Creek Road, and overflows on to non-designated areas on the park entrance road.

VISITOR USE PREFERENCE STUDY

On summer weekend days, on average ~1,200 vehicles enter the park, which creates long lines at the park entrance station.

Visitors are sensitive to the amount of time they wait in line at the entrance station.

Most (~85%) of park-inbound vehicle traffic goes to Medano Creek and the Dunes.

The Dunes Lot fills early/mid-morning.

Medano Creek Rd roadside parking fills to its full extent during peak hours on peak summer weekends and holidays.

After the lot fills, overflow vehicles park on the roadside of Medano Creek Road.

Most visitors do not feel crowded with current use levels while recreating at Medano Creek and the nearby dunes.

Family walking in Medano Creek. (NPS/Patrick Myers)



Sand wheelchairs allow visitors to access Medano Creek and the Dunes from the Dunes Parking Lot. (NPS/Patrick Myers)



TRANSIT OPTIONS

Transit Feasibility Assessment

- Internal Transit Options
 - Evaluated three scenarios within the park
- External Transit Options
 - Evaluated three scenarios outside the park boundary
- Concerns
 - GRSA isolated location
 - Lack of existing potential transit business partnerships
 - Visitor dogs and gear on shuttles or in vans

Recommendation: Transit is not feasible presently. Further observation after infrastructure improvements is needed.

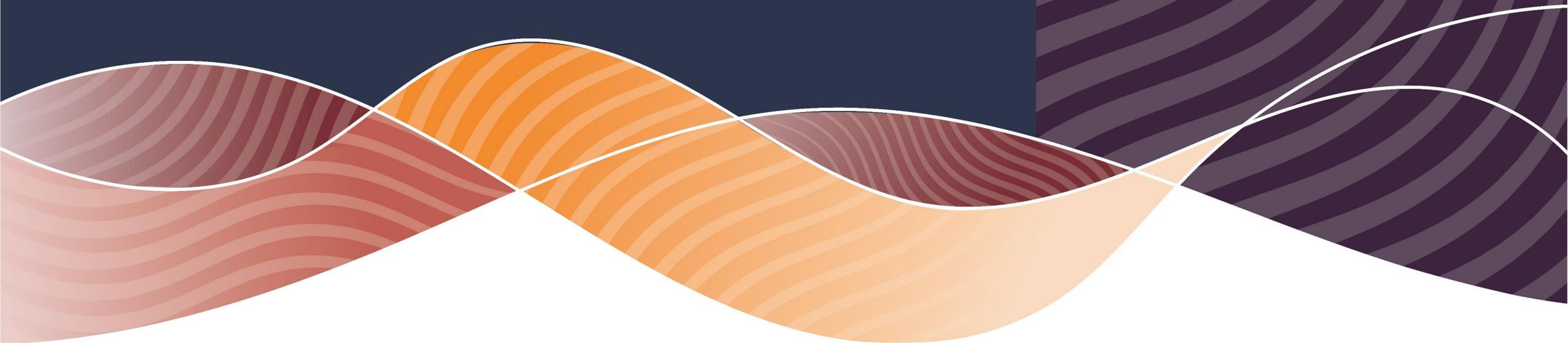


Bus at Hermits Rest shuttle stop at Grand Canyon National Park. (NPS/Michael Quinn)

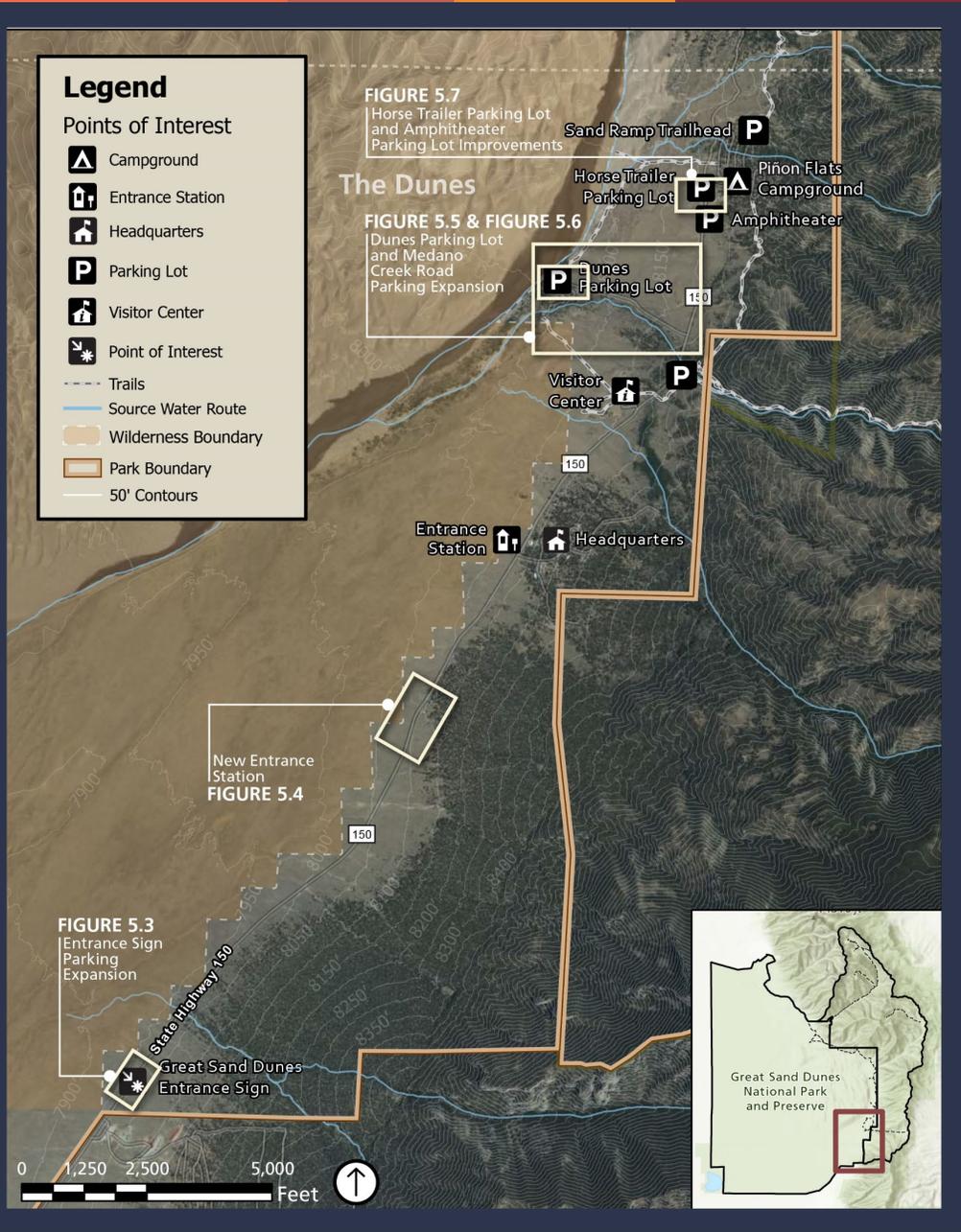


Bus at Mohave Point shuttle stop at Grand Canyon National Park. (NPS/Michael Quinn)

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT



Transportation Improvement Concept OVERVIEW

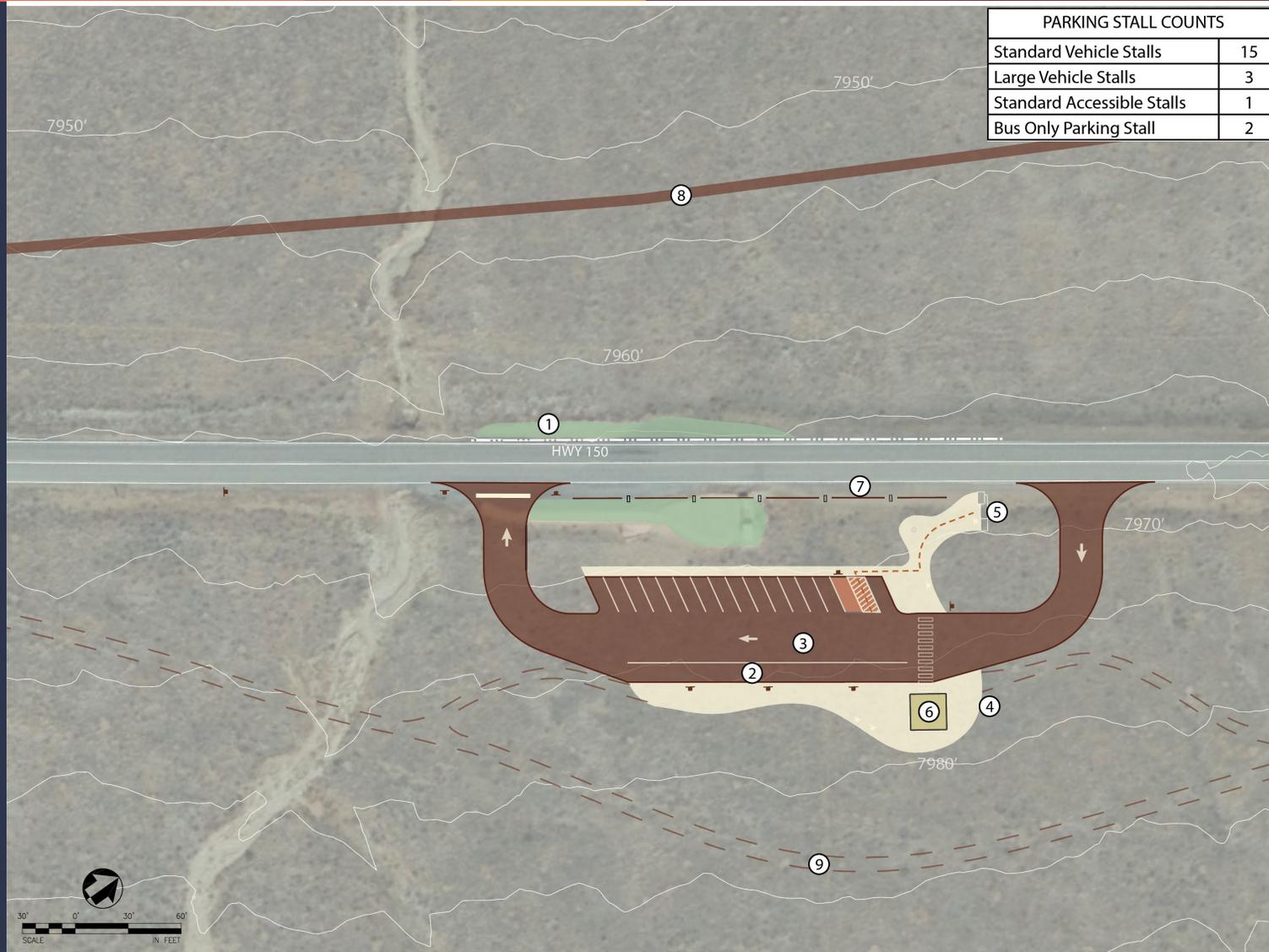


Snow Patches on the Dunes.
(NPS/Patrick Myers)

Overview of Medano Creek and children playing.
(NPS/Patrick Myers)

Transportation Improvement Concept

ENTRANCE SIGN

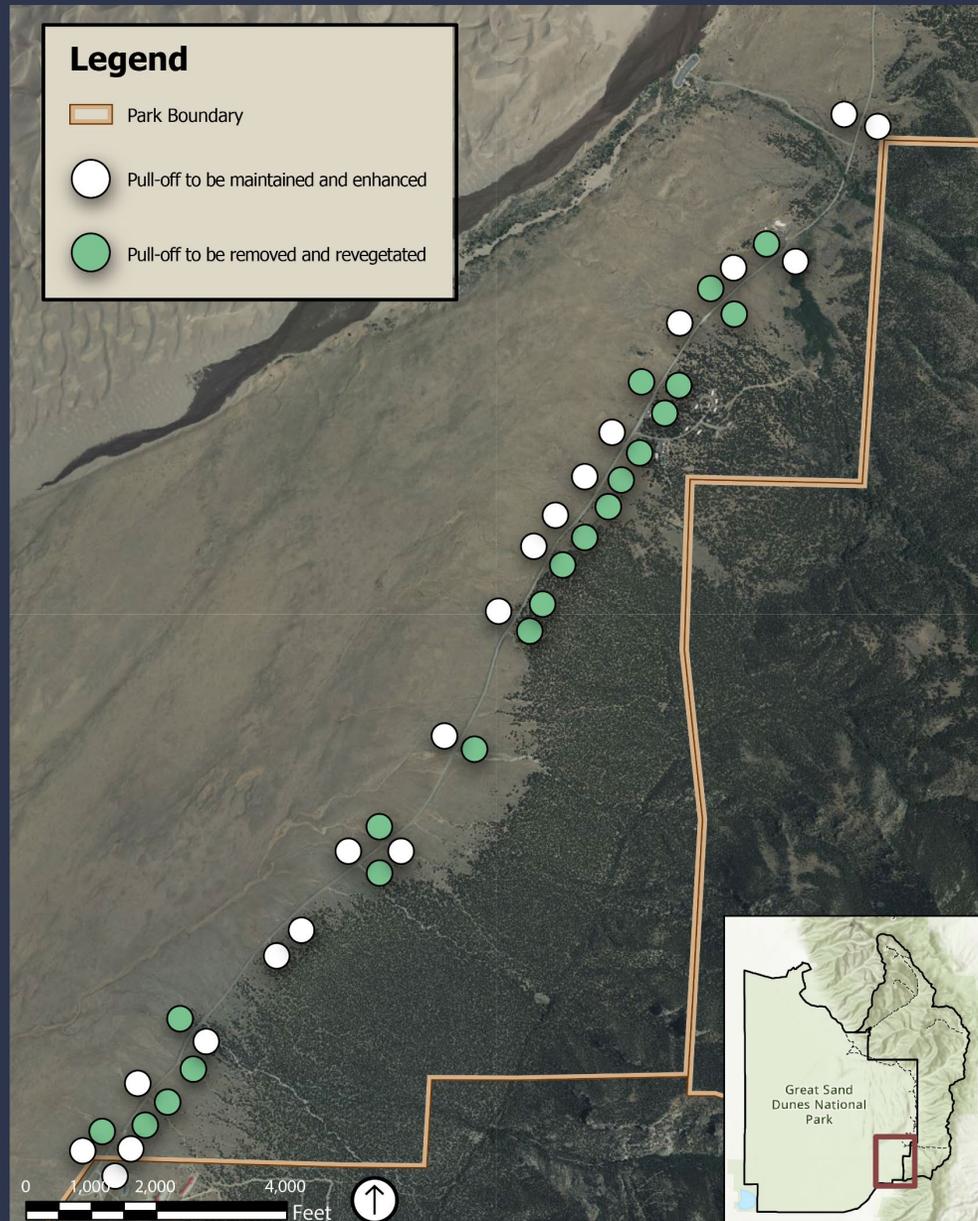


LEGEND

- Visitor Informational Signage
 - Vehicular Wayfinding Signage
 - Accessible Route
 - Existing Conditions + 5' Contours
 - New Roadway Barrier
 - New Striping
 - Temporary Roadway Barrier
 - New Asphalt
 - New Concrete
 - New Pedestrian Walkway
 - New Structure
 - Restoration Plantings
- ① Restoration of an informal pull-off with native plantings and temporary roadway barrier.
 - ② Large vehicle/ bus parking.
 - ③ New one-way parking lot for visitors.
 - ④ Informational signage with interpretive kiosk.
 - ⑤ Existing park entrance sign to be reconstructed.
 - ⑥ New vault toilet restrooms.
 - ⑦ Split rail fence.
 - ⑧ Formal 10' multi-modal trail connecting the Piñon Flats Campground, Visitor Center, and new entrance station to the park entrance.
 - ⑨ Alternate multi-modal trail alignment.



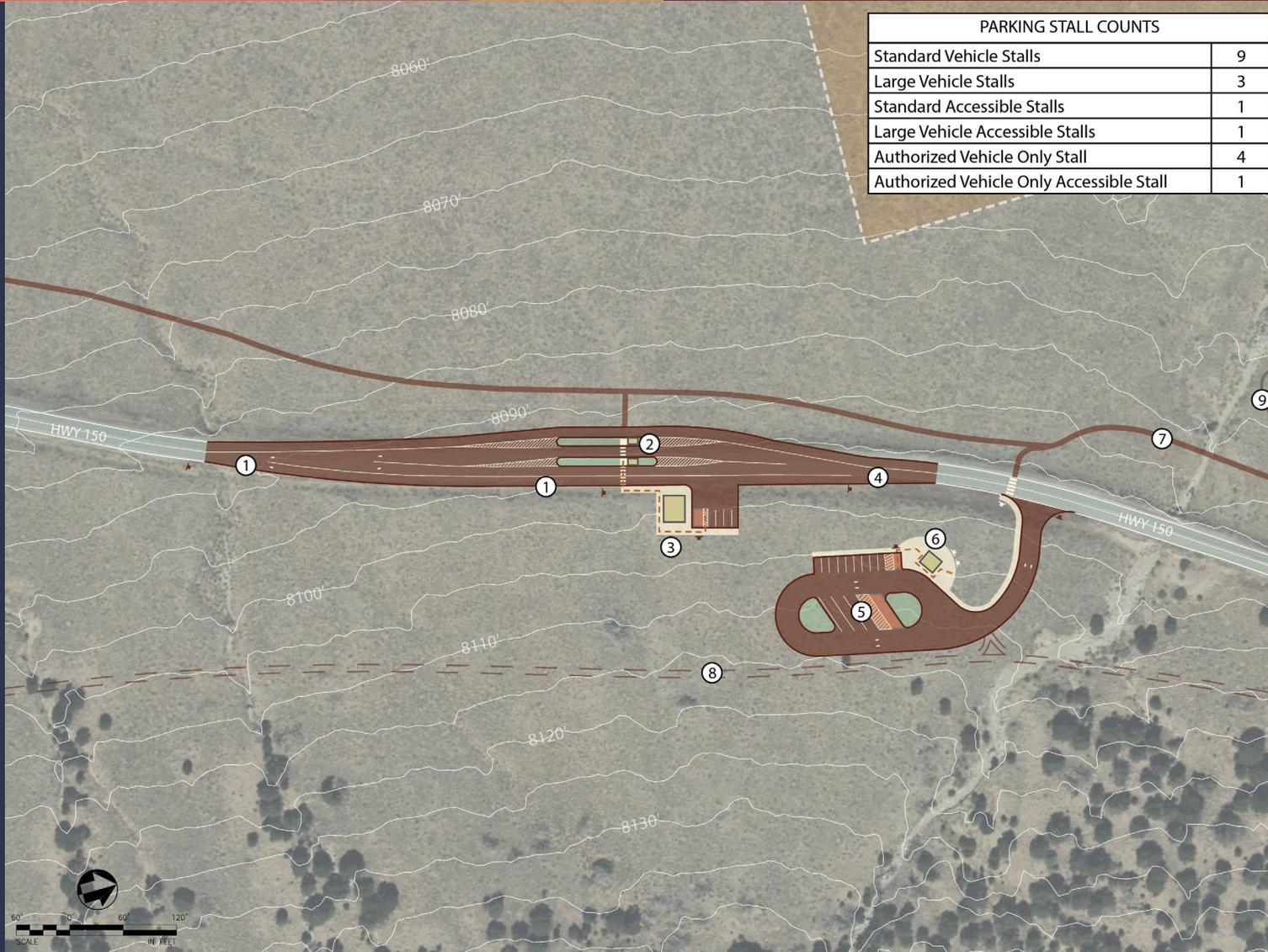
Transportation Improvement Concept PARK ENTRANCE ROAD



PULL-OFFS

- Two existing formal paved pull-off and 20 existing informal gravel roadside pull-offs will be demolished, revegetated, and temporary fencing will be provided to aid in plant reestablishment.
- The seven remaining existing informal pull-offs will be formalized with pavement and defined with roadway barrier.
- The twelve remaining formal pull-offs will be defined with roadway barrier.
- Located near culverts for maintenance access or on the western side of State Highway 150.

Transportation Improvement Concept ENTRANCE STATION

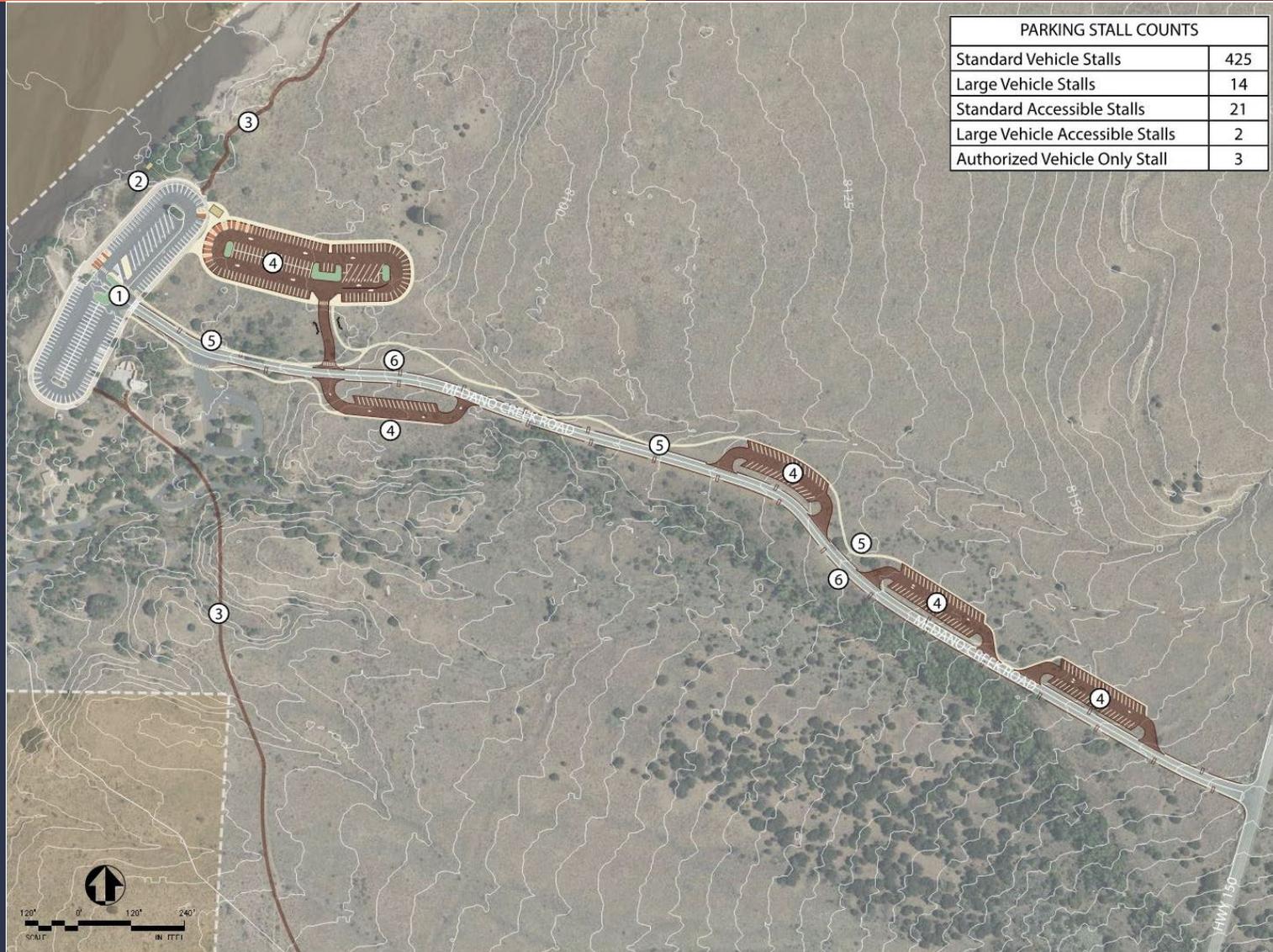


LEGEND

- Visitor Informational Signage
 - Vehicular Wayfinding Signage
 - Accessible Route
 - Existing Conditions + 5' Contours
 - New Striping
 - New Asphalt
 - New Concrete
 - New Pedestrian Walkway
 - New Structure
 - Restoration Plantings
 - Wilderness Boundary
- ① New bypass lane to provide ease of access for authorized vehicles to the new park staff building and into the park.
 - ② Two new entrance station kiosks, one of which is accessible from new parking lot.
 - ③ New park staff building with restroom, break room, and safe.
 - ④ End of bypass lane.
 - ⑤ New two-way overlook parking lot.
 - ⑥ New welcome overlook with wayfinding signage and plumbed restrooms.
 - ⑦ Formal 10' multi-modal trail connecting the Piñon Flats Campground, Visitor Center, and new Entrance Station to the park entrance.
 - ⑧ Alternate multi-modal trail alignment.
 - ⑨ Nature trail.



Transportation Improvement Concept DUNES LOT & MEDANO CREEK ROAD



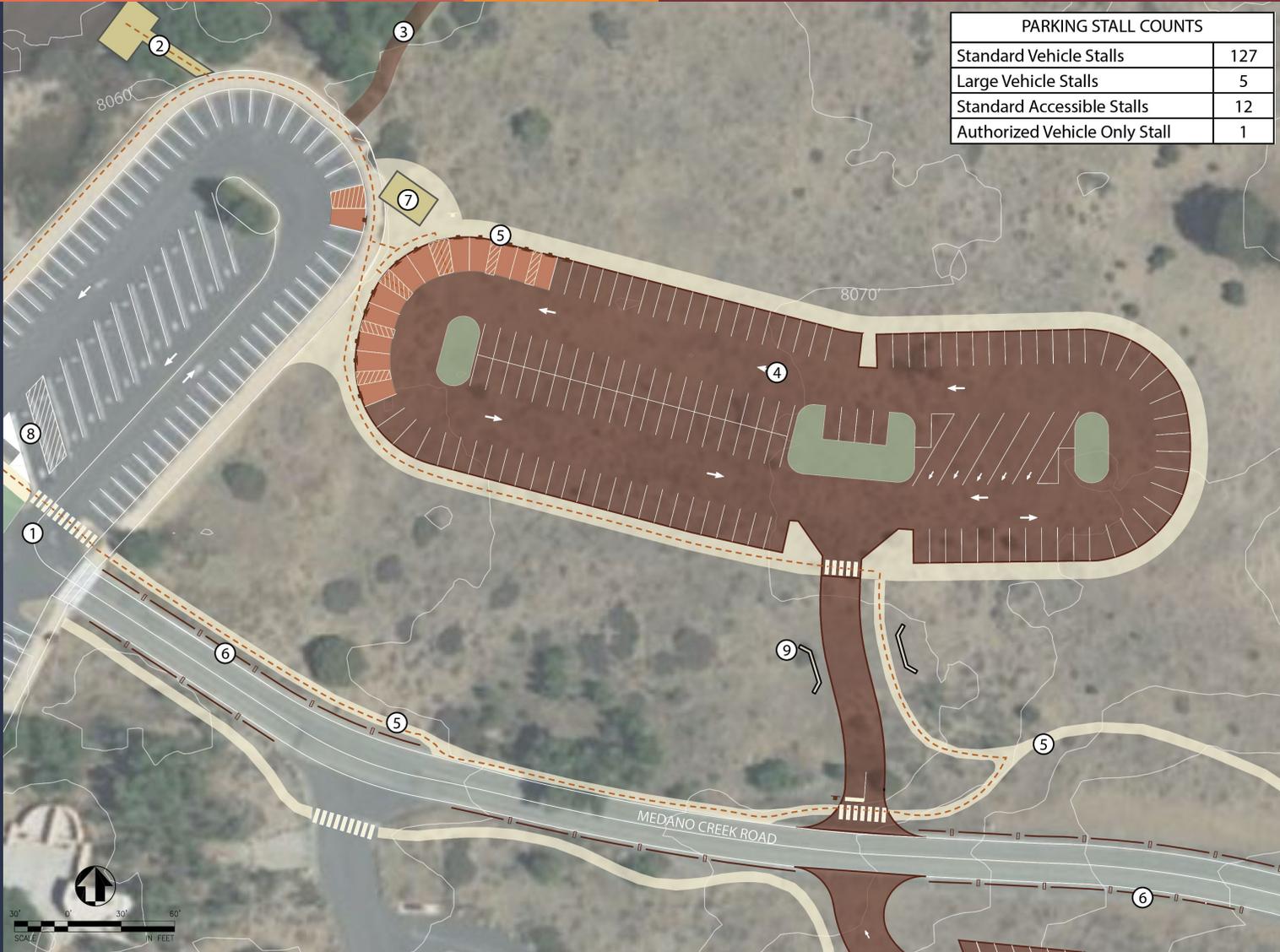
PARKING STALL COUNTS	
Standard Vehicle Stalls	425
Large Vehicle Stalls	14
Standard Accessible Stalls	21
Large Vehicle Accessible Stalls	2
Authorized Vehicle Only Stall	3

LEGEND

- Visitor Informational Signage
 - Vehicular Wayfinding Signage
 - Accessible Route
 - Existing Conditions + 5' Contours
 - New Split Rail Fence
 - New Striping
 - New Asphalt
 - New Concrete
 - New Pedestrian Walkway
 - New Structure
 - Restoration Plantings
 - Wilderness Boundary
- ① New marked crosswalk through existing Dunes Parking Lot.
 - ② New accessible boardwalk overlook.
 - ③ Formal 10' multi-modal trail connecting the Piñon Flats Campground to the Visitor Center.
 - ④ New visitor parking lots along Medano Creek Road with standard stalls, large vehicle stalls, and accessible stalls.
 - ⑤ New trail off of roadway connecting visitors safely to the dunes.
 - ⑥ New split rail fence ties into existing fencing to prevent roadside parking.



Transportation Improvement Concept NEW DUNES PARKING LOT



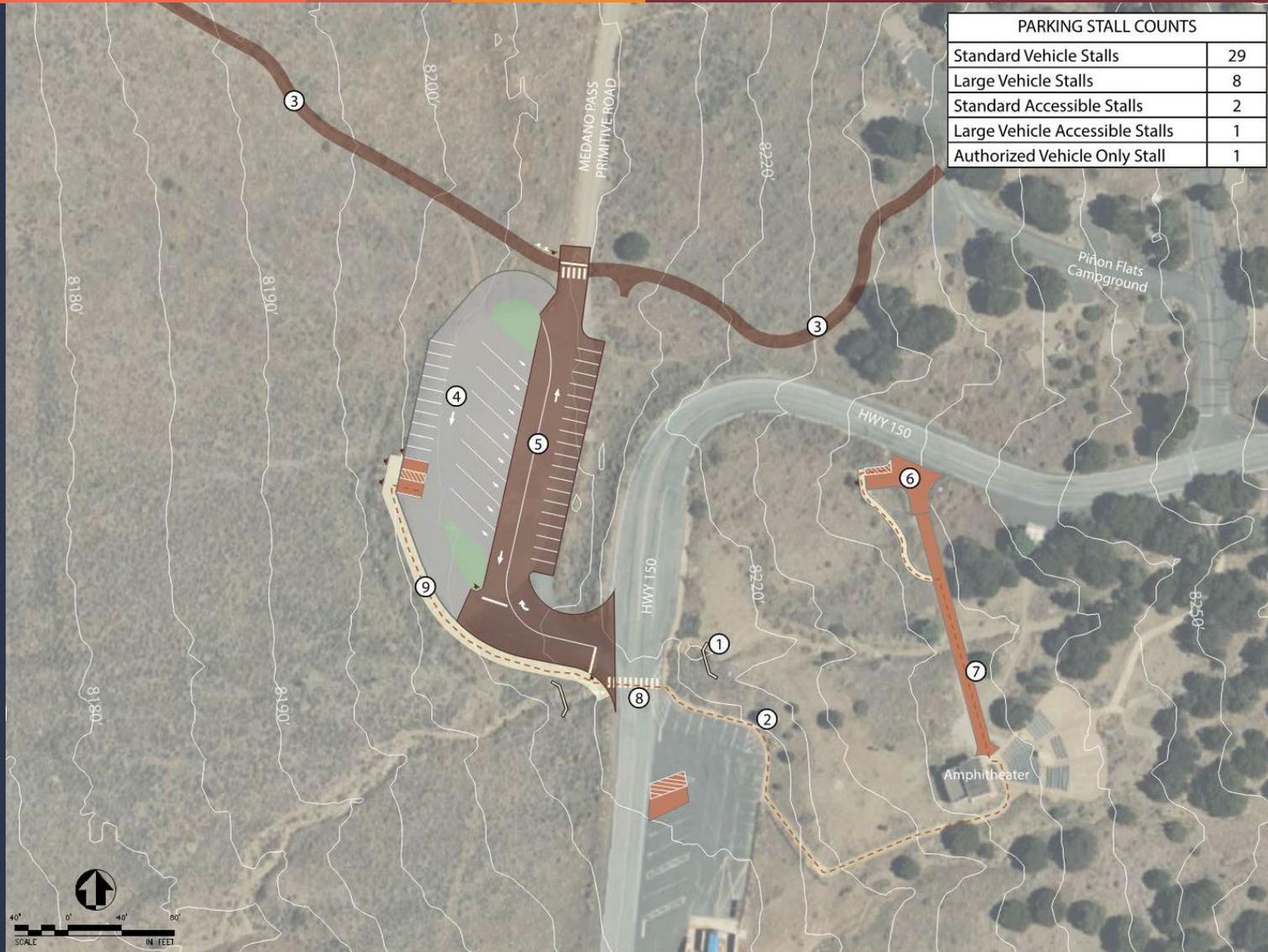
PARKING STALL COUNTS	
Standard Vehicle Stalls	127
Large Vehicle Stalls	5
Standard Accessible Stalls	12
Authorized Vehicle Only Stall	1

LEGEND

- Visitor Informational Signage
 - Vehicular Wayfinding Signage
 - Accessible Route
 - Existing Conditions + 5' Contours
 - New Split Rail Fence
 - New Striping
 - New Asphalt
 - New Concrete
 - New Pedestrian Walkway
 - New Structure
 - Restoration Plantings
- ① New marked crosswalk through existing Dunes Parking Lot with re-vegetated island.
 - ② New accessible boardwalk overlook.
 - ③ Formal 10' multi-modal trail connecting the Piñon Flats Campground to the Visitor Center.
 - ④ New visitor parking lot.
 - ⑤ New sidewalk off of roadway connecting visitors safely to the dunes.
 - ⑥ New split rail fence ties into existing fencing to prevent roadside parking.
 - ⑦ New plaza with storage shed for accessible sand wheelchairs and plumbed comfort station.
 - ⑧ Two large vehicle accessible stalls.
 - ⑨ Proposed drainage culvert under roadway.

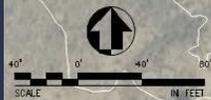


Transportation Improvement Concept HORSE TRAILER LOT & AMPHITHEATER



LEGEND

- Visitor Informational Signage
 - Vehicular Wayfinding Signage
 - Accessible Route
 - Existing Conditions + 5' Contours
 - New Roadway Barrier
 - New Striping
 - New Asphalt
 - New Concrete
 - New Pedestrian Walkway
 - New Gravel
 - New Structure
 - Restoration Plantings
- ① Culvert extension due to access drive.
 - ② New curb ramp to improve accessibility
 - ③ Formal 10' multi-modal trail connecting the Piñon Flats Campground, Visitor Center, and new Entrance Station.
 - ④ Gravel parking area with stalls delineated with recycled fire hose.
 - ⑤ Expanded Horse Trailer Parking area with asphalt surface.
 - ⑥ Amphitheater accessible parking stall to be expanded with an accessible pathway.
 - ⑦ New maintenance vehicle access road and accessible route.
 - ⑧ New marked crosswalk across highway.
 - ⑨ New accessible parking with access to amphitheater.



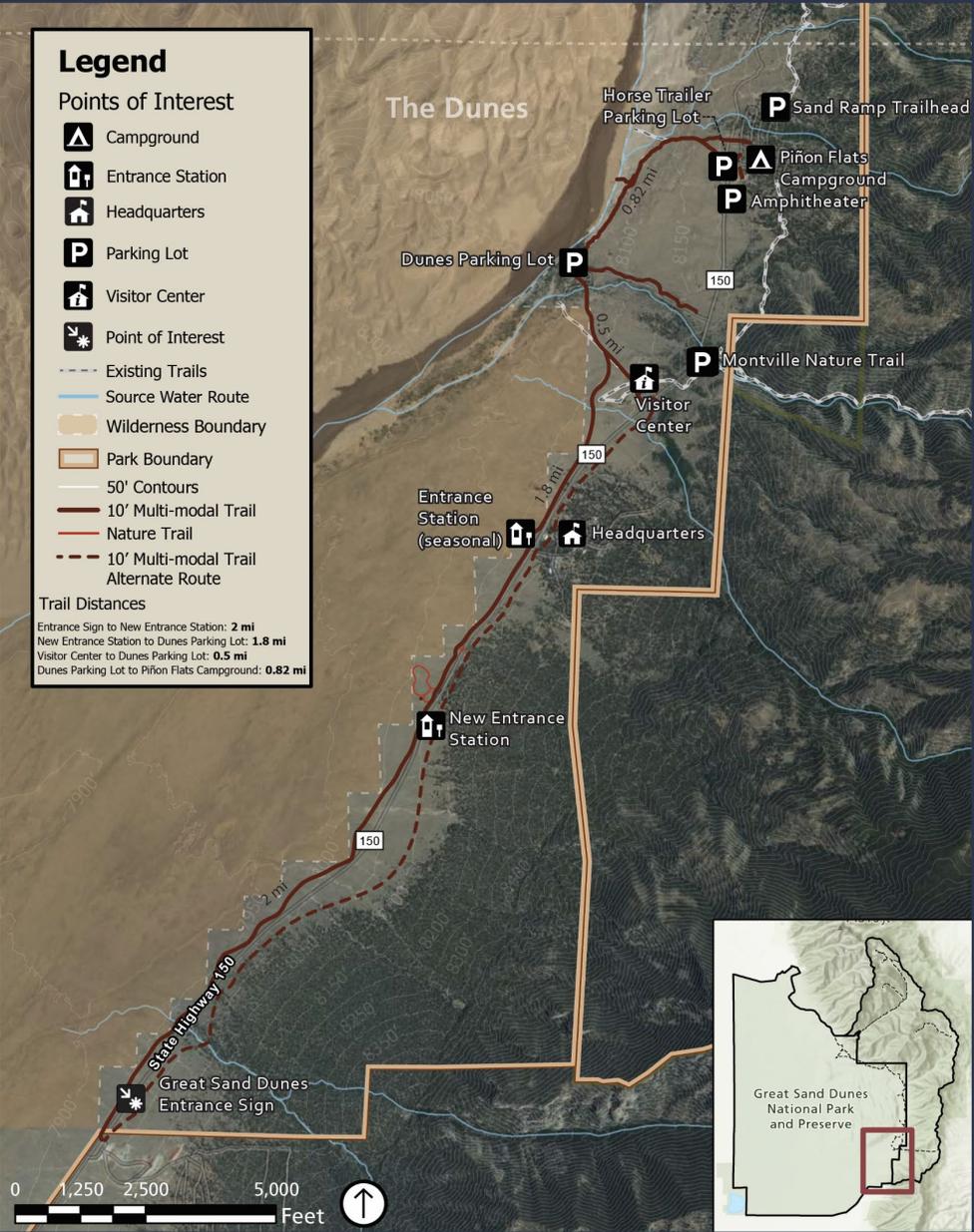
Transportation Improvement Concept **MULTI-MODAL TRAIL**

MULTI-MODAL TRAIL

A new paved, 10-foot-wide multi-modal trail is proposed that connects the campground, amphitheater, and horse trailer parking area with the existing dunes parking lot and day use areas. This trail will also extend to the visitor center and the gated entrance to the park. The entirety of the trail will be OUTSIDE the wilderness boundary.

NATURE TRAILS

Connecting to the multi-modal trail north of the new entrance station and welcome overlook will be two new nature trails. Nature trails will be defined compacted earth pathways with interpretive signage following existing social trails on the western side of State Highway 150. Each nature trail will be adjacent to formal pull-off parking, one of which will pass by the popular snag that is often used as a photo opportunity by visitors.



NEXT STEPS

Pre-NEPA and NEPA Process Steps for the Transportation and Transit Plan

Step 1. Define purpose and develop potential actions

Step 2. Civic Engagement

March 13th @ 6pm

Rio Grande Water Conservation District

March 14th @6pm

Baca National Wildlife Refuge Office

Step 3. Refine concept

Step 4. Identify environmental impacts

Step 5. Public review of plan and environmental
document

Step 6. Analysis of public comment

Step 7. Prepare final plan and decision document

Step 8. Release final plan and decision document



Prairie sunflowers, Dunes, and Crestone Peaks. (NPS/Patrick Myers)

HOW TO COMMENT

The comment period is from
February 28th - March 28th

ONLINE

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=99139>

IN-PERSON

Make sure to sign in, grab a comment sheet, and visit the 5 stations

Station 1: Overview Map and Project Overview

Station 2: Entrance Sign, Park Entrance Road, and Entrance Station

Station 3: Dunes Parking Lot and Medano Creek Road

Station 4: Horse Trailer Parking Lot and Amphitheater

Station 5: Multi-Modal Trail



Milky Way over Medano Creek (NPS/Patrick Myers)

QUESTIONS?

PEPC LINK: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=99139>