



## PUBLIC SCOPING

August 2011

### Proposed Apgar Parking Plan and Relocation of Visitor Center Operations &

### Proposed Apgar Transit Center Parking Lot Expansion/Environmental Assessment

#### *Proposed Apgar Parking Plan and Visitor Center Relocation*

Apgar has long been a traditional entry point for visitors to Glacier National Park, and thousands of people visit Apgar Village each summer. Numerous commercial services are available, including guest accommodations, dining, retail, recreation, and Red Bus tours. Several NPS facilities are also present, including a visitor contact center, backcountry permit office, ranger station, and campground.

Inadequate parking at Apgar has led to congested streets and heavy crowding between pedestrians, traffic, and vehicles parked both on and off the roadway. During the summer when visitation is highest, existing parking lots are nearly always full, parking for RV's and towing units is limited, RV's parked at the boat launch inhibit access to the dock and boat ramp, and vehicles parked overnight take up valuable parking space.

The park has made some parking improvements to begin implementing the *Final Commercial Services Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement* (CSP, 2004), which seeks to resolve parking concerns at Apgar and "promote pedestrian use of the area and separate vehicle circulation from pedestrian circulation." These improvements have alleviated some parking issues, but they have not fully addressed the problem. Additional actions called for by the CSP include formalized roadside parking and improved designated parking areas off the Apgar Loop Road, more oversized vehicle parking, and new accessible trails and walks. But the plan does not specify locations for these improvements. The park has now identified a number of locations where new parking may be developed (Figure 1).

Additionally, the park decided in the *Final General Management Plan* (GMP, 1999) to establish the West Side Discovery Center north of the Going-to-the-Sun Road (GTSR) and Camas T-intersection. The new center will replace the existing visitor contact center in Apgar Village, which is far too small to accommodate a high number of visitors. As part of the mitigation included in the *Going-to-the-Sun Road Rehabilitation*

*Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement* (2003), the park called for a new facility at the planned West Side Discovery Center location to serve as a transit staging area and facilitate visitor access along the GTSR during rehabilitation. In 2007, the Apgar Transit Center was constructed north of the T-intersection. In addition to being a staging area for the GTSR transit system, the center also provides information and orientation for visitors.

To implement the GMP, the park plans to move visitor center operations from Apgar Village to the transit center in 2012. The new visitor center will contain more interpretive exhibits, offer educational programs, and provide information. A small addition to the existing transit center structure may be required. Options for the existing visitor center are being considered, and include converting the site to a plaza with public restrooms.

At this time, the NPS does not find it necessary to do an environmental assessment (EA) for the additional parking at Apgar Village, nor for the relocation of visitor center operations since these actions were identified in the GMP and the CSP. The new parking areas at Apgar would be constructed within the area analyzed by the final environmental impact statement for the CSP, and would not cause an increase in the determined level of impacts. The addition to the transit center structure would occur in an area recently disturbed during construction of the Apgar Transit Center.



Lake View Drive, Apgar. NPS photo.

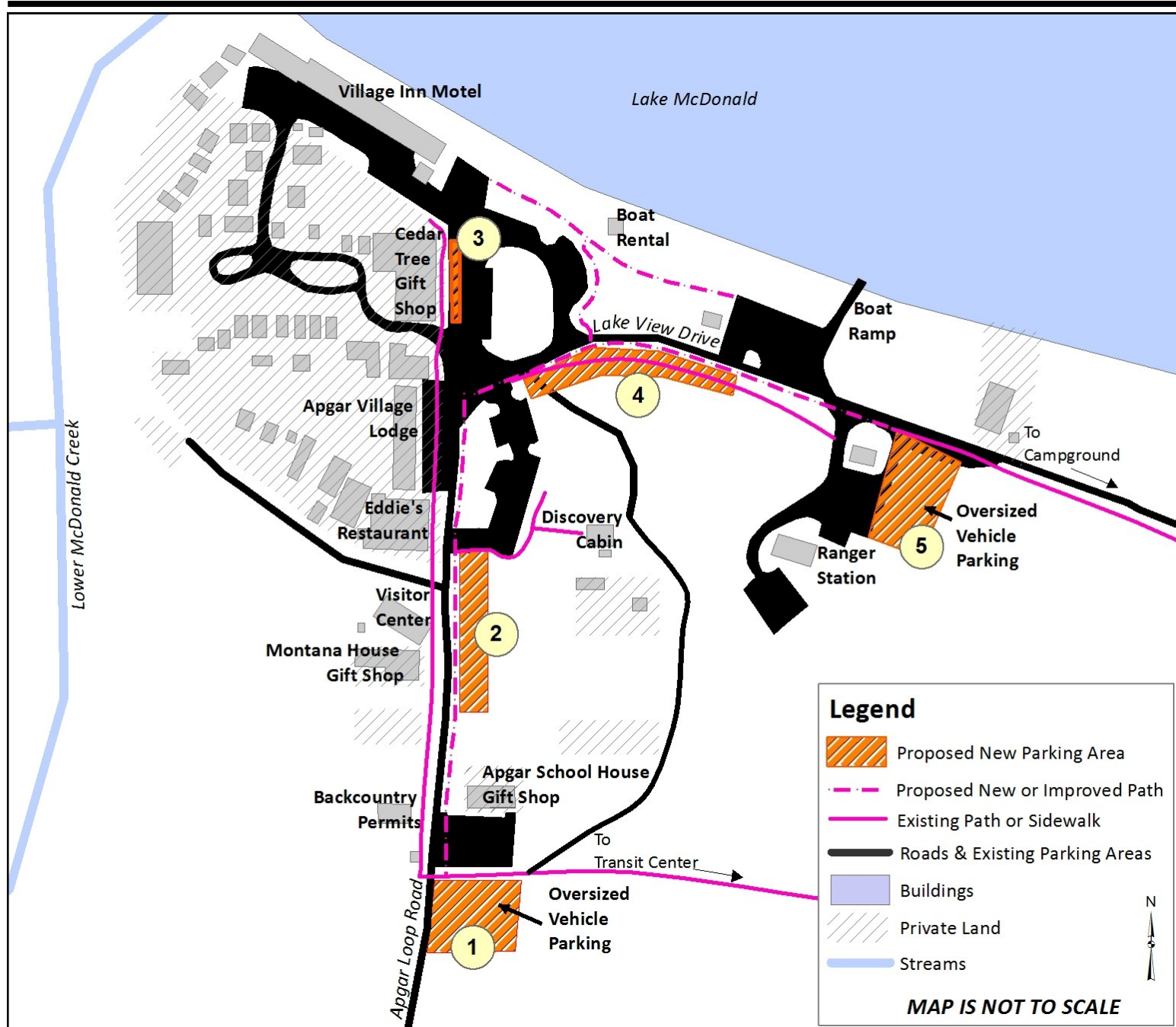


Figure 1: Conceptual illustration of proposed new parking areas and paths in Apgar Village.

### Objectives:

- Address parking congestion at Apgar Village.
- Improve traffic and pedestrian circulation, orientation, and safety.
- Redirect oversized vehicle parking away from the Apgar Village core area and boat ramp.
- Protect & maintain the “village” atmosphere.
- Co-locate visitor center and transit services.
- Complete actions called for in the CSP and the GMP.

### Proposed Project:

Moving visitor center operations to the transit center could alleviate some of the parking issues at Apgar, which would affect the final number, size, and locations of new parking areas. The Apgar Parking Plan would therefore be phased, beginning with the transfer of visitor center operations and concluding with new parking improvements. Some previous changes to parking would be reevaluated. The plan would include some or all of the following (see also Figure 1):

- A new oversized vehicle parking area south of the Apgar School House parking lot. ①
- A new parking area on the east side of Apgar Loop

(Continued on page 3)



(Proposed Project continued from page 2)

- Road, across from the existing visitor center. ②
- Head-in street parking outside the Cedar Tree gift shop. ③
- A new parking area on the south side of Lake View Drive, west of the ranger station. ④
- An expansion of the ranger station parking lot for oversized vehicles. ⑤
- New and/or formalized accessible paths along the Apgar Loop Road between the Apgar School House parking lot and Lake View Drive, between the boat launch and the Village Inn, and along Lake View Drive between Apgar Village and the Ranger Station.

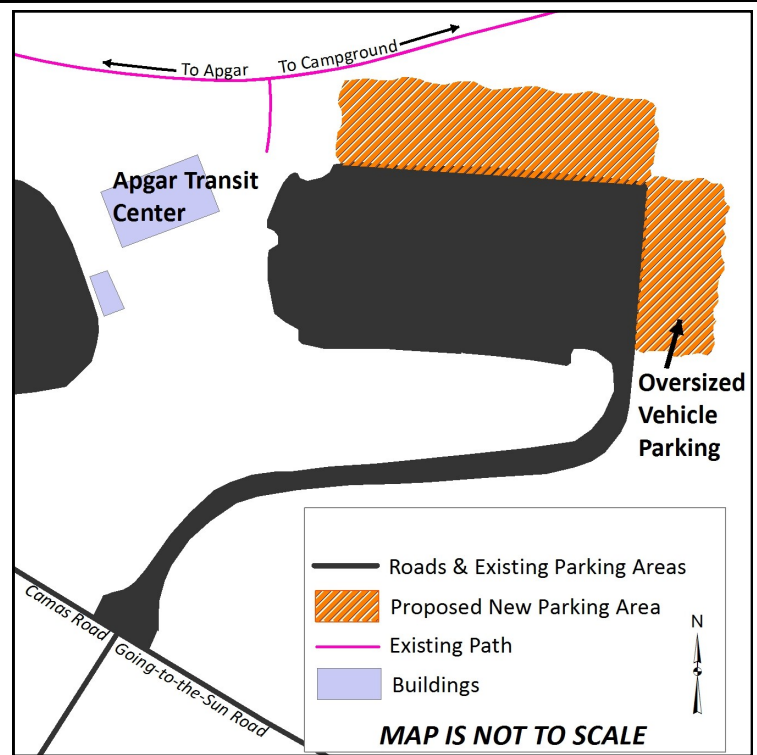
### ***Proposed Apgar Transit Center Parking Lot Expansion/Environmental Assessment***

The parking lot at the Apgar Transit Center was designed to provide parking for visitors using the transit system and is too small to accommodate additional parking once visitor center operations are relocated to the transit center. The park is therefore proposing an expansion to the existing parking lot (Figure 2).

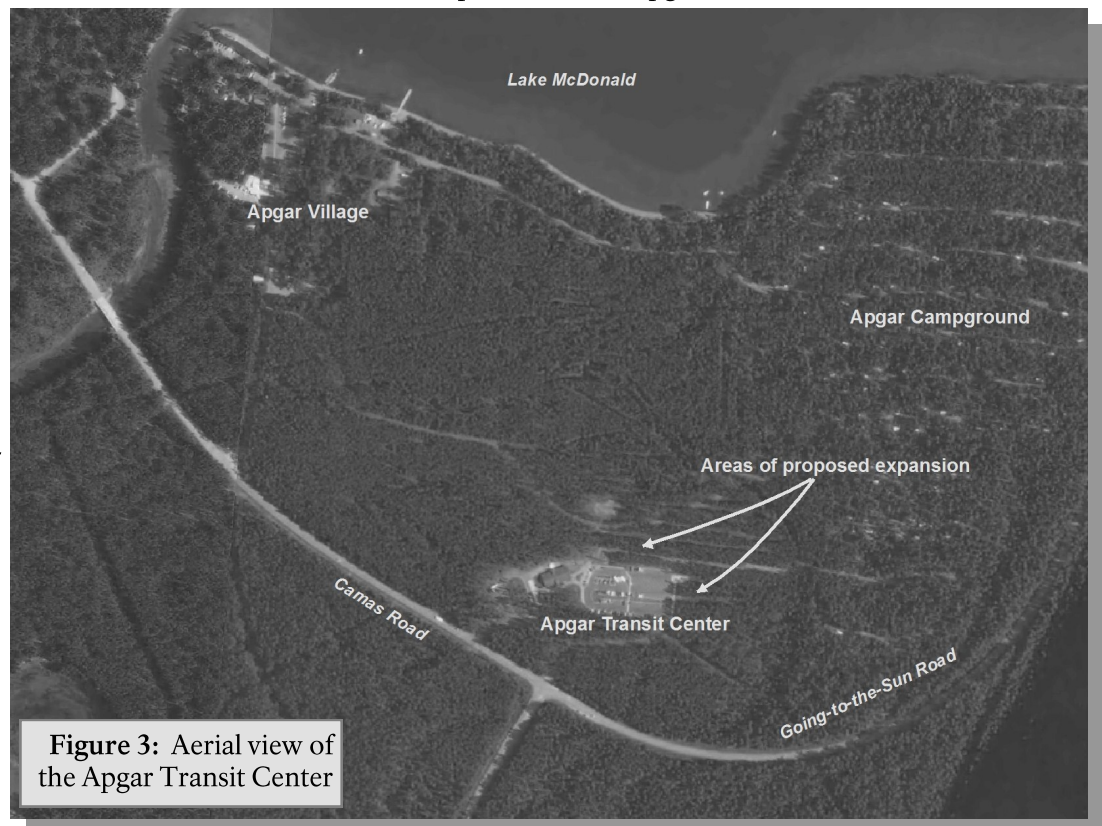
The NPS is preparing an EA for the proposed expansion since the project has not been evaluated in a previous plan and would increase the area of disturbance originally described by the *Going-to-the-Sun Road Rehabilitation Plan/Final EIS*. The expansion of the parking lot would likely impact approximately 2.0 acres of adjacent lodgepole pine forest (Figure 3), and would accommodate approximately 50 passenger cars and 15 RV and oversized vehicles.

#### ***Objective:***

- Accommodate additional parking needs once visitor center operations are relocated to the transit center.



**Figure 2:** Conceptual illustration of a proposed parking lot expansion at the Apgar Transit Center.



#### ***Alternatives Considered to date:***

- No Action:** The parking lot at the Apgar Transit Center would not be expanded.
- Expand the Apgar Transit Center parking lot (proposal):** The expansion would accommodate approximately 50 passenger cars and 15 RV's and oversized vehicles.

## *Public Participation*

Public Scoping for these projects is twofold:

- 1) The NPS is conducting scoping for the purposes of an EA on the proposed expansion of the Apgar Transit Center parking lot. Your comments will help identify issues and other alternatives to evaluate in the EA. There will be another opportunity for you to comment when the plan/EA is completed.
- 2) The NPS is seeking public comment on the relocation of visitor center operations and the construction of additional parking areas at Apgar Village, actions that were already analyzed in two environmental impact statements. Public comments on these actions are being sought to determine if there are any new resource concerns that were not considered in the original EIS's.

Please post your comments online at:

***[www.parkplanning.nps.gov/ApgarTransitParking](http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/ApgarTransitParking)***

**Or**

Send comments to:

***Superintendent Glacier National Park  
Apgar Transit Center Parking EA and Apgar Parking Plan  
PO Box 128  
West Glacier, MT 59936  
Phone: 406-888-7901***

A public meeting is scheduled for September 7, 2011 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.  
at the Apgar Transit Center in Glacier National Park.  
Presentations will be given at 3:30 and 5:00 p.m.

Please provide comments by  
**September 15, 2011**

### ***Issues to Consider:***

- Ongoing and future use of Apgar Village and the Apgar Transit Center.
- Impacts to vegetation.
- Impacts to cultural resources.
- Impacts to the aesthetic character of Apgar Village.
- Visitor experience & circulation in the Apgar area.
- Visitor safety.



Congested roadside parking near the Apgar Boat Ramp.  
NPS photo.