



# GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD CORRIDOR Management Plan



## What is in this newsletter?

**WHY** does the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor need a management plan?

**WHAT** will the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor management plan address?

**WHAT** are the long-term vision and goals for the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor?

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**WHEN** will public meetings be held?

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## A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the National Park Service (NPS), I am pleased to announce that Glacier National Park is beginning a multi-year planning effort to address transportation and visitor use issues within the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor. With the road rehabilitation effort coming to conclusion in 2017 it is an ideal time to begin this planning effort. Between the end of June and mid-August the corridor has experienced crowding and congestion along the road, at pullouts and in parking areas. Many of the more popular hiking trails have seen increased congestion and resource impacts on vegetation and wildlife. Furthermore, a recent financial analysis has indicated that the shuttle system is not financially sustainable as funding will not support acquisition of new buses.

With such extraordinary resources to protect in this part of the park, we need your help in developing this plan and environmental impact statement. This newsletter will introduce you to

some of the issues and concerns, information and data we have collected through research, and a draft vision as well as goals recently crafted to help guide this process. We invite you to review this early work and let us know what you think.

To learn more, please join us at one of several public meetings being held this summer. You will have the opportunity to ask questions, share your ideas and concerns in greater depth, and provide comments directly to park staff. Through September 6, you may also submit your comments by mail or online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/glac>.

We welcome your continued participation in this effort, as together we shape the future of the iconic Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor.

Sincerely,  
Kym A. Hall  
Acting Superintendent

# WHY does the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor need a management plan?

- Park visitation is increasing and trends indicate it is likely to continue to increase.
- These increases have and will likely continue to add stress to existing facility infrastructure (parking and restrooms) and increase traffic congestion on the road.
- Visitation has significantly increased on some of the popular trails in the Going-to-the-Sun Road (GTSR) corridor by as much as 250%. This increase has resulted in visitor congestion, crowding, frequent wildlife encounters, displacement of wildlife, trampling of vegetation, and widening of popular trails in sensitive resource areas.
- Popular areas, such as the Avalanche Creek area on the west side of the park, and the Logan Pass area, continue to be congested, resulting in safety issues and resource impacts.
- The shuttle system, launched in 2007, was intended to reduce congestion along the GTSR, at parking areas, and at pullouts. However, the road is still congested and the parking lots and pullouts are at capacity during the peak visitor period (end of June to the middle of August).



- The shuttle system was initially designed and implemented to mitigate impacts from the road rehabilitation project. As the rehabilitation effort and associated traffic delays conclude in 2016, the system will need to be redesigned.
- A recent financial analysis indicates that the shuttle system is not financially sustainable for the long-term.

# WHAT will the Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor Management Plan address?

The plan will develop a range of alternatives to address the following :

- management of visitor use and experience,
- congestion,
- protection of natural and cultural resources in the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor, and
- long-term financial sustainability of the park’s shuttle system.

Conditions change over time, therefore management strategies need to be flexible. A monitoring program will be developed to assure protection of Glacier’s resources and high quality visitor experiences.

## WHAT the plan will not change

- Management and operation of Red Buses and Sun Tours transportation services on the Going-to-the-Sun Road will continue and no major changes to either service will result from this plan.
- Private vehicles will continue to be allowed to drive the Going-to-the-Sun Road.

# A FEW FACTS



- Going-to-the-Sun Road is 50 miles long.
- From the West Entrance, it takes about 1.3 hours to get to Logan Pass, without construction delays.
- From July to August 2012, 196,000 vehicles entered the park through the West Entrance.
- From at least 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. every day mid-July to mid-August the parking lot at Logan Pass is usually full.



- The shuttle system was started in 2007 to help reduce construction delays during road rehabilitation.
- That year, ridership per day was 830, with the highest boardings at Logan Pass, Apgar Transit Center and St. Mary.
- During the first year of operation, the shuttle system reduced vehicle traffic on the GTSR by about 15-20% during the busiest times of day.
- In 2012, 138,000 visitors rode the shuttle, a 61% increase over 2008 levels.
- Flathead County Eagle Transit operates the shuttle system from July 1 to Labor Day.
- The initial cost for the shuttle fleet was \$4 million, made possible by federal funds, other grants, and key partnerships.
- It could cost another \$4-6 million to replace the current shuttle fleet, which needs to happen soon.



- For every mile traveled, the average passenger vehicle emits 423 grams of carbon dioxide into Glacier’s pristine air. One vehicle trip across the GTSR releases 21,150 grams of greenhouse gases!
- Riding the shuttle across the GTSR reduces carbon emissions.
- Since 2007, non-native invasive plants have spread at all shuttle stops.



- There were 2.1 million visitors in 2012.
- Visitation has increased 16% since 1988.
- Visitors can access 18 of 26 trailheads along the GTSR within 1/4 mile of a shuttle stop.
- Only 5% of hikers on the the Avalanche Lake Trail use the shuttle system to access the trailhead.
- Since 1988, use of the Avalanche Lake Trail has increased 250%.
- In 2009, 84% of hikers on the Highline Trail used the shuttle to facilitate their hike.
- 30-40% of those hikers on the Highline Trail felt that overcrowding and non-natural sounds had a negative impact on their experience.



- In 2009, the park contributed \$22.3 million to the local economy.
- It costs about \$750,000 to operate the shuttle system each year.
- A \$25 entrance fee is required for each car to enter the park. \$7.50 of the entrance fee supports the shuttle system; therefore, it does not cost extra to ride the shuttle.
- Including maintenance and buying shuttle vehicles, the shuttle system cost the NPS more than \$22 per rider in 2007.
- In 2008, it was determined that the overall shuttle system would be sustainable only if other funds could be found to replace the current fleet.





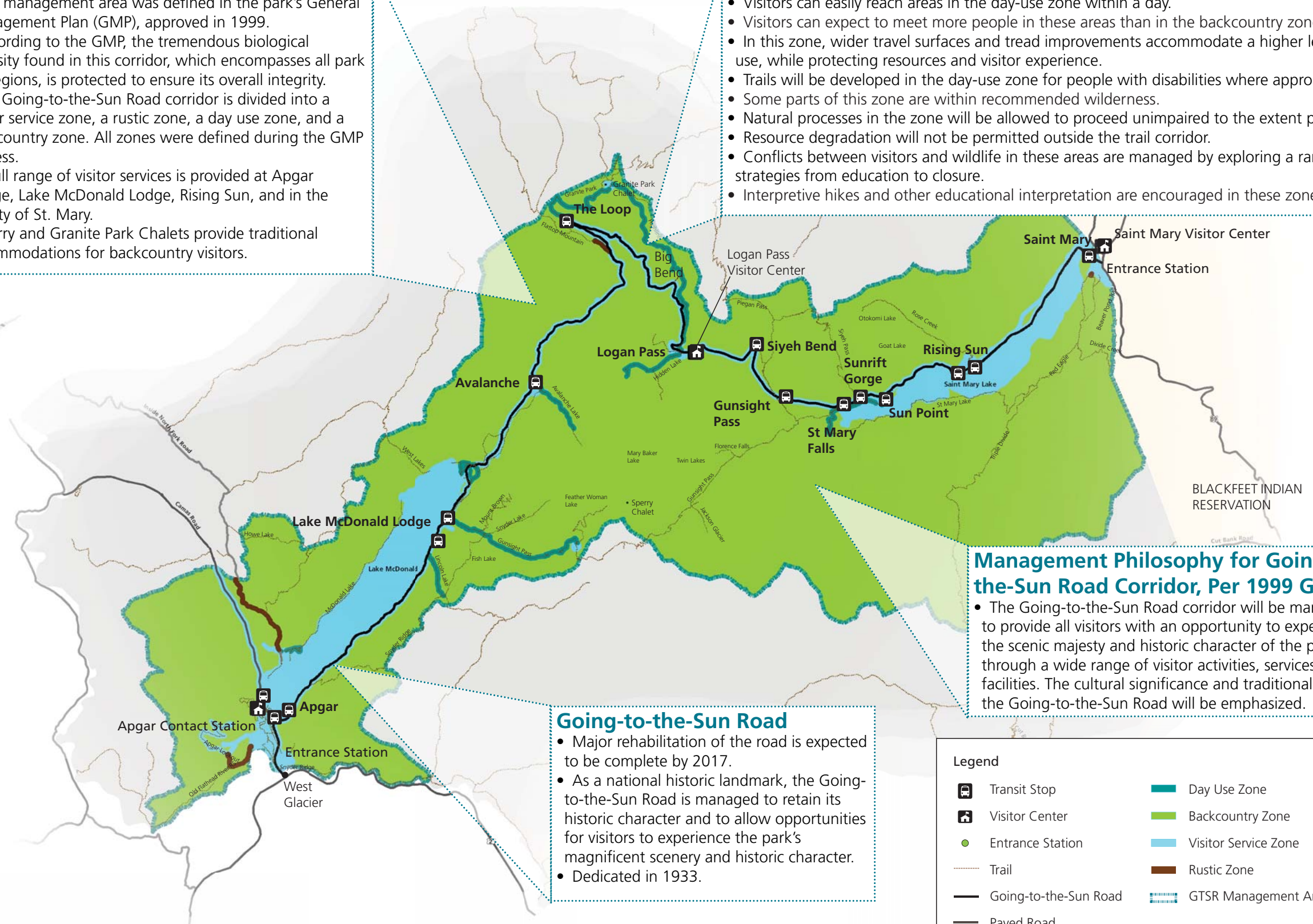


## Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor

- This management area was defined in the park's General Management Plan (GMP), approved in 1999.
- According to the GMP, the tremendous biological diversity found in this corridor, which encompasses all park ecoregions, is protected to ensure its overall integrity.
- The Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor is divided into a visitor service zone, a rustic zone, a day use zone, and a backcountry zone. All zones were defined during the GMP process.
- A full range of visitor services is provided at Apgar Village, Lake McDonald Lodge, Rising Sun, and in the vicinity of St. Mary.
- Sperry and Granite Park Chalets provide traditional accommodations for backcountry visitors.

## Day-Use Zone

- Visitors can easily reach areas in the day-use zone within a day.
- Visitors can expect to meet more people in these areas than in the backcountry zone.
- In this zone, wider travel surfaces and tread improvements accommodate a higher level of use, while protecting resources and visitor experience.
- Trails will be developed in the day-use zone for people with disabilities where appropriate.
- Some parts of this zone are within recommended wilderness.
- Natural processes in the zone will be allowed to proceed unimpaired to the extent possible.
- Resource degradation will not be permitted outside the trail corridor.
- Conflicts between visitors and wildlife in these areas are managed by exploring a range of strategies from education to closure.
- Interpretive hikes and other educational interpretation are encouraged in these zones.



## Management Philosophy for Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor, Per 1999 GMP













- The Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor will be managed to provide all visitors with an opportunity to experience the scenic majesty and historic character of the park through a wide range of visitor activities, services, and facilities. The cultural significance and traditional use of the Going-to-the-Sun Road will be emphasized.

## Going-to-the-Sun Road

- Major rehabilitation of the road is expected to be complete by 2017.
- As a national historic landmark, the Going-to-the-Sun Road is managed to retain its historic character and to allow opportunities for visitors to experience the park's magnificent scenery and historic character.
- Dedicated in 1933.

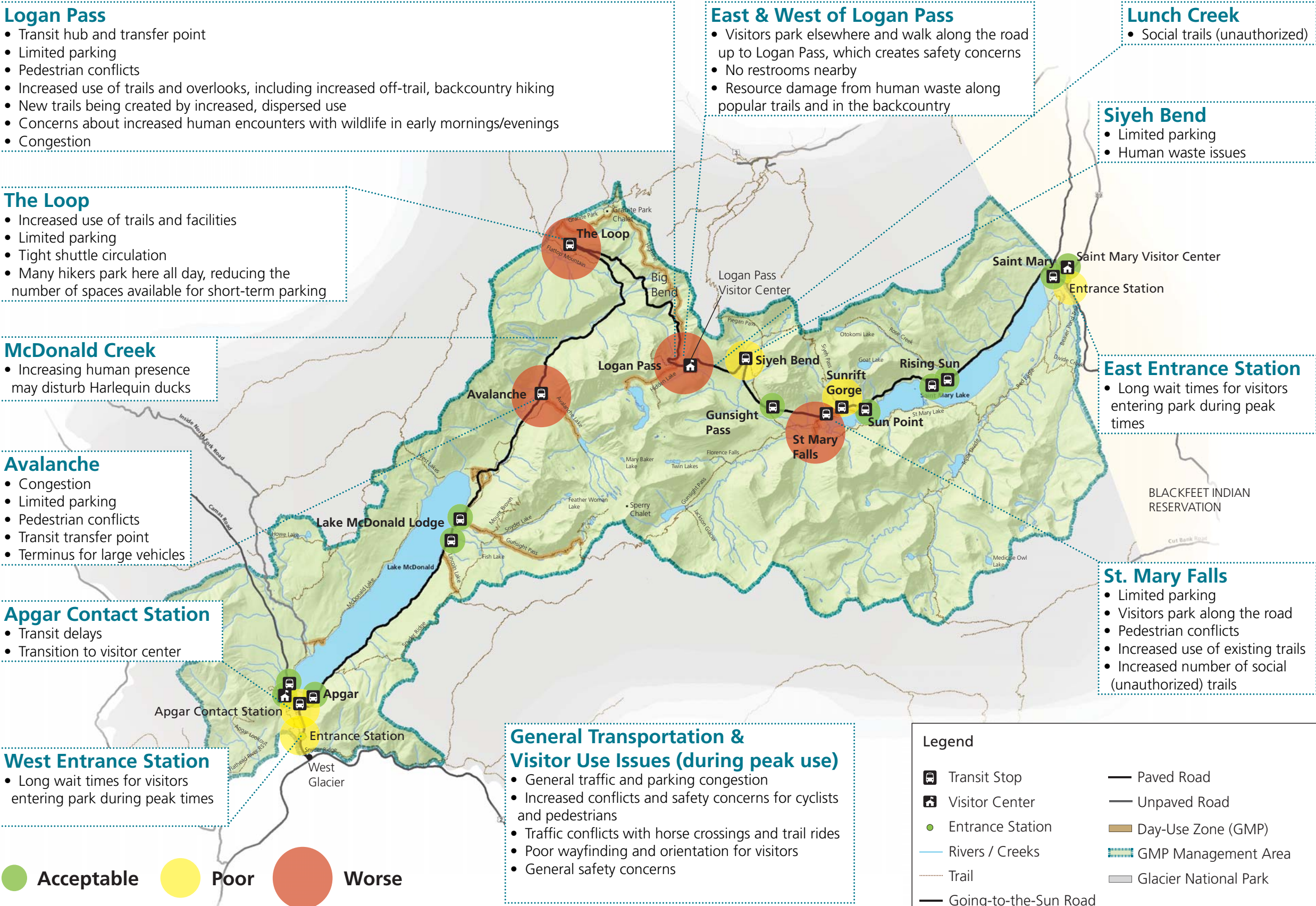
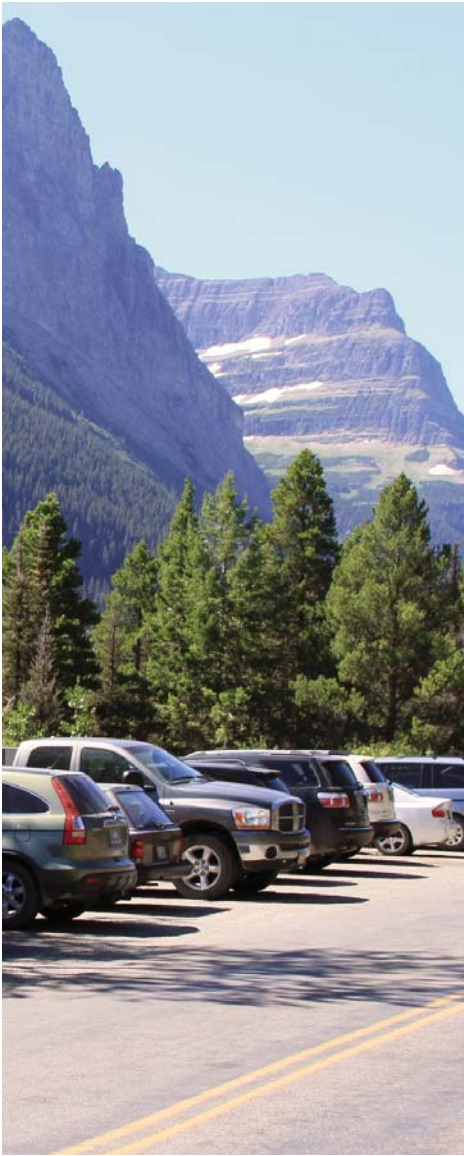
# GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT AREA

### Legend

	Transit Stop		Day Use Zone
	Visitor Center		Backcountry Zone
	Entrance Station		Visitor Service Zone
	Trail		Rustic Zone
	Going-to-the-Sun Road		GTSR Management Area
	Paved Road		
	Unpaved Road		







During peak times & peak season (end of June to end of August), certain areas in the corridor become

**H O T S P O T S**



WHAT are the long-term vision and goals for the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor?

A vision statement is a concise, compelling expression of what the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor should be like in the future, or what we hope to achieve there. The vision statement for the corridor will help advance the NPS mission and build on the management philosophy established for the corridor in the 1999 General Management Plan. The vision statement establishes the overarching direction for this current planning effort and is the basis for goals, objectives, alternatives, and future planning decisions that will come later in the process. Every alternative must uphold this broad vision, but each alternative may seek to achieve this vision in different ways.

During internal scoping for this planning process, the following draft vision and goal topics were created to guide the development of alternatives.

The management philosophy described below served as the basis for developing the draft vision and goal topics on the next page.



MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

The Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor will be managed to provide all visitors with an opportunity to experience the scenic majesty and historic character of the park through a wide range of visitor activities, services, and facilities. The cultural significance and traditional use of the Going-to-the-Sun Road will be emphasized.



DRAFT VISION

With spectacular scenery and significant natural and cultural resources, the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor provides a variety of iconic and unique visitor experiences for current and future generations from around the country and the world. Through a well-integrated and flexible system of transportation and visitor use management strategies, the park minimizes impacts to resources, enhances visitor experiences and adaptively responds to emerging challenges and opportunities.

DRAFT GOAL TOPICS

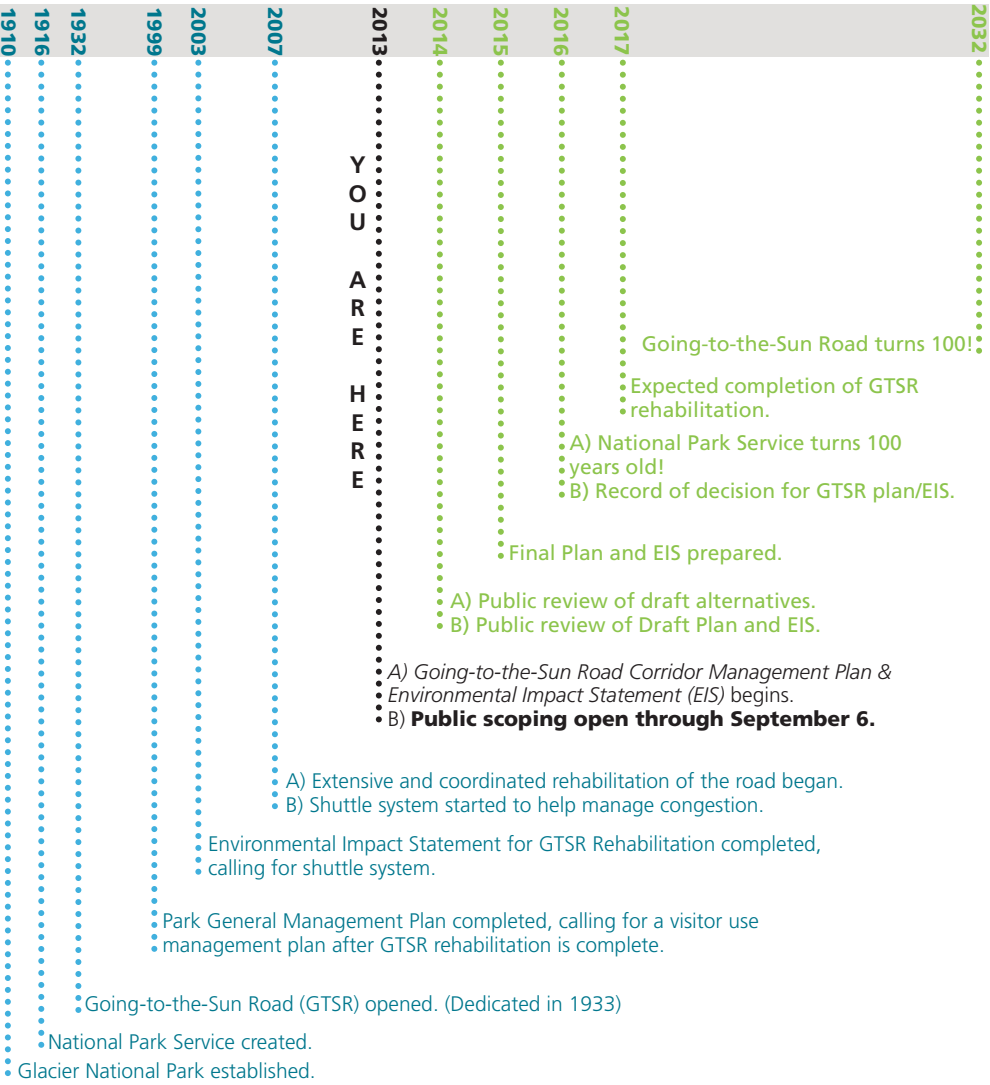
- Develop adaptive management strategies for transportation and visitor use
- Protect natural resources
- Protect cultural and historic resources
- Enhance climate change responsiveness
- Improve visitor use and experience
- Improve information, orientation and interpretive opportunities
- Maintain and operate roads and trails
- Connect with neighboring communities





WHAT will happen next?

Then, Now and in the Future



WHEN will public meetings be held?

Open Houses will be held June through August in the various locations shown below. All meetings are open to everyone. We invite you to share your ideas, concerns and impressions.

JUNE - Conversations with surrounding communities		
Monday, <b>June 24</b> , 4–7 p.m.	Kalispell, Montana	Flathead National Forest 650 Wolfpack Way Kalispell, MT 59901
Tuesday, <b>June 25</b> , 4–7 p.m.	Missoula, Montana	Ruby's Inn & Convention Center 4825 N Reserve Street Missoula, Montana 59808
Wednesday, <b>June 26</b> , 4–7 p.m.	Great Falls, Montana	Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center 4201 Giant Springs Road Great Falls, MT 59405
Thursday, <b>June 27</b> , 4–7 p.m.	Waterton, Alberta Canada	Bayshore Inn Resort & Spa Glacier Room 111 Waterton Ave Waterton Park, Alberta, Canada
JULY - Conversations with visitors		
Friday, <b>July 19</b> , 9 a.m.–1 p.m.	West Glacier, Montana	Apgar Transit Center West Glacier, MT
Friday, <b>July 19</b> , 10 a.m.–3 p.m.	St. Mary, Montana	St. Mary Visitor Center St. Mary, MT
Friday, <b>July 19</b> , 10 a.m.–3 p.m.	Logan Pass, Glacier National Park, Montana	Logan Pass Visitor Center
AUGUST - Conversations with visitors		
Friday, <b>August 9</b> , 9 a.m.–1 p.m.	West Glacier, Montana	Apgar Transit Center West Glacier, MT
Friday, <b>August 9</b> , 10 a.m.–3 p.m.	St. Mary, Montana	St. Mary Visitor Center St. Mary, MT
Friday, <b>August 9</b> , 10 a.m.–3 p.m.	Logan Pass, Glacier National Park, Montana	Logan Pass Visitor Center
SEPTEMBER 6, 2013 - 1st PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD CLOSES		

HOW do you join the conversation?

We want to hear your ideas, concerns, and impressions about the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor. We also want your feedback on the draft vision and goal topics (page 9). Your input will help us identify issues and concerns, as well as alternatives to consider in this plan.

You can submit your comments through September 6, 2013 by scanning the code to the right with your smart phone, or by visiting the planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/glac>.

You can also hand-deliver comments to Glacier National Park Headquarters or mail them to:  
Glacier National Park, Attn: GTSR Corridor Plan  
P.O. Box 128  
West Glacier, Montana 59936



WHO can you contact for more information?

**Mary Riddle**  
Chief of Planning and Environmental Compliance  
  
Glacier National Park  
Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park  
PO Box 128  
West Glacier, MT 59936  
406-888-7898



Thousands of people stay connected to Glacier through social media. Are you one of them?



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Glacier National Park  
Attn: GTSR Corridor Plan  
PO Box 128  
West Glacier, Montana 59936

# **GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD CORRIDOR**

## **Management Plan**

