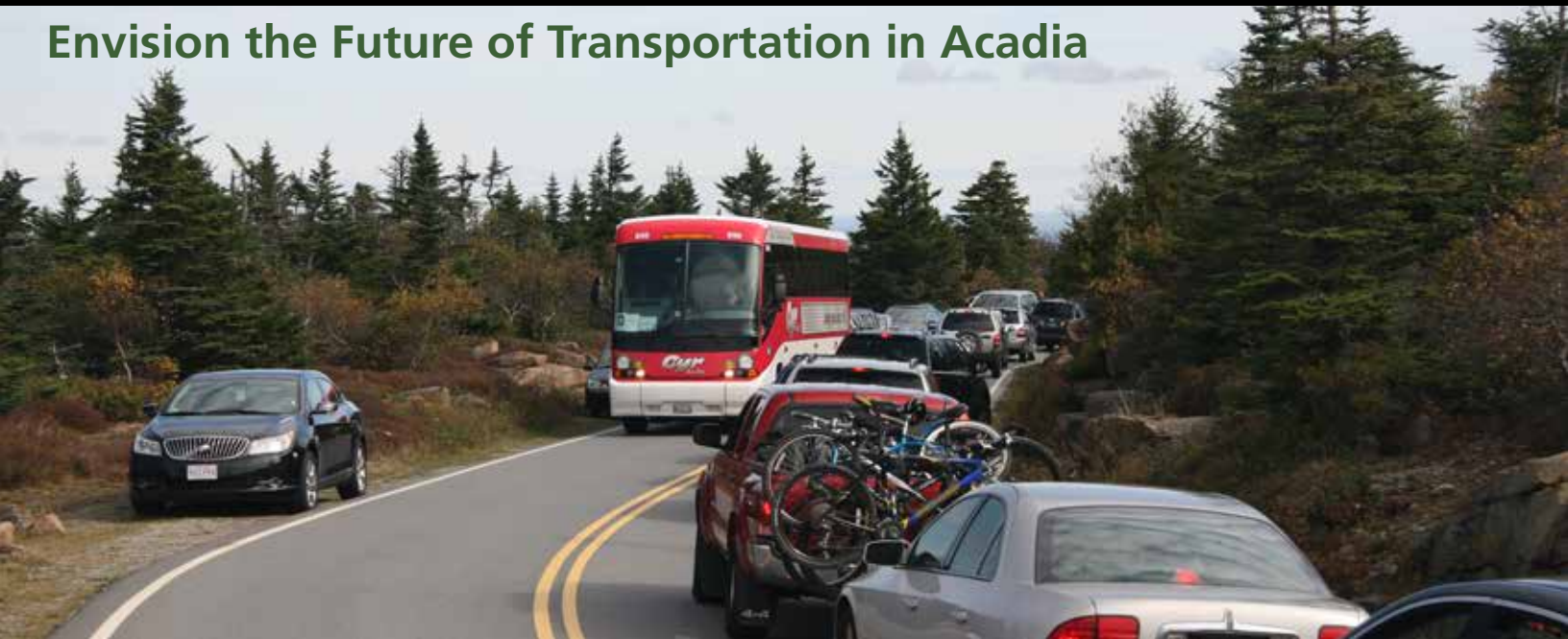




Envision the Future of Transportation in Acadia



A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service is initiating work to develop a Transportation Plan for Acadia. The purpose of the transportation plan is to determine how best to provide safe and efficient transportation and a variety of high quality experiences to visitors within Acadia while ensuring the protection of park resources and values. The plan will comprehensively examine several management options to improve safety on park roads and reduce crowding and congestion at key visitor destinations and travel corridors.

Transportation issues at the park are diverse and complex. Concentrated traffic includes private vehicles, concessions buses, commercial motor coaches, the park/community regional public transit system, and bicycles. The plan is needed at this time because the concentrated traffic creates public safety issues, severe congestion and crowding, reduced quality of visitor experiences, impacts on the road systems, impacts on the park's natural and cultural resources, and pressures on the efficiency and sustainability of park operations.

I encourage you to get involved with the process and add your voice to the planning for the transportation plan. The park will be hosting several upcoming meetings where you can learn more. Meeting dates, times, and locations are included on the last page of this newsletter. You can find out more, submit comments, and get project updates on our website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ACADTransportationPlan>.

Sincerely,

Sheridan Steele, Superintendent
Acadia National Park

What is in this NEWSLETTER?

WHY does the park need a transportation plan?

WHAT are the long-term goals for transportation planning in the park?

HOW do you join the conversation?

WHEN will public meetings be held and **WHERE**?

WHO can you contact for more information?

WHY does the park need a transportation management plan?

- High volumes of people accessing park lands during the short summer season causes congestion along park roads in specific locations at specific times which causes reduced level of service and safety concerns.
- The quality of the visitor experience is diminished as a result of congestion on roadways and crowding at specific attraction sites and along carriage roads during peak use times/seasons.
- During peak-use times, demand for transportation-related services exceeds the available infrastructure and service capacity.
- Transportation infrastructure and high volumes of visitor use causes impacts on natural and cultural resources of the park.
- Large vehicles and mixed uses are incompatible with existing historic transportation infrastructure in the park which results in crashes and other incidents.
- The Schoodic district of the park will see significant increases in use and existing transportation alternatives and capacity will not be sufficient or appropriate.



WHAT are the long term goals of transportation planning in the park?

- Establish desired conditions for natural and cultural resources and visitor experiences at destinations and travel corridors throughout the park.
- Identify strategies to address parking and roadway capacity limitations and associated impacts to resources, safety, and visitor experiences.
- Evaluate and establish guidance to improve safety and reduce conflicts among oversized vehicles (e.g., buses, RVs, campers), motorcycles, bicyclists, and passenger cars operating on park roads.
- Identify potential transportation infrastructure improvements to increase safety and enhance resource stewardship, sustainability and NPS operational efficiency.

What the plan will not change:

The following are outside the range of alternatives the park would consider.

- Removing cars from the park
- Instituting a park-wide ferry system
- Raising historic bridges



Relationship to the General Management Plan

This plan is intended to build upon the goals and direction articulated in the park's General Management Plan.

Key goals set in the General Management Plan include the following:

- Reduce crowding in high-density use areas by limiting parking.
- Reduce reliance on automobiles by providing non-motorized mobility options and by establishing a public transportation system.
- Retain opportunities for low-density recreation on the west side of Mount Desert Island, Schoodic Peninsula, and the offshore islands.
- Protect the aesthetic and historic values of Park Loop Road and other park roads.

FACTS about Transportation in Acadia



People

Acadia is among the highest visited parks in the system with 2.4 million visitors annually.



Popular Destinations

Most of Acadia's visitors access four key destinations—Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Jordan Pond House, and Cadillac Mountain—via the narrow, winding, historic, and scenic Park Loop and Cadillac Mountain roads.



Access

Most visitors arrive via motor vehicle (either private, public, or commercial), but in many areas, this vehicle traffic mixes with pedestrians and bicycles, especially in high-visitation areas.



Commercial Use

Over 120 commercial use authorizations were issued by the park to motor coach and taxi tour companies in 2013, and there are two concession tour bus companies providing as many as a dozen park tours daily.



By Water

The park has seen a 350% increase in cruise ship passenger visitation since 2000, and there can be as many as 5,000 cruise ship passengers a day visiting the area.



Parking

A week-long survey in August 2014 found that 22 of 24 designated parking areas at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center and along the Park Loop Road reached capacity, some for as many as six hours a day. During peak hours, as many as 500 cars are parked informally along roadsides, which exceeds the entire parking lot capacity along Park Loop Road by 40%.



Island Explorer

During a recent survey, respondents expressed a desire for additional transit service as the Island Explorer bus service is often full at peak times, forcing visitors to wait for another bus if the first arriving is full.



Cadillac Mountain Road

A 2013 engineering study determined that it is impossible for larger vehicles (including buses and recreational vehicles) to stay completely in their lanes when negotiating the three hairpin turns of Cadillac Mountain Road. From 1989 to 2000, 29 accidents along Cadillac Mountain Road and in the Cadillac Mountain parking lots involved large vehicles.



Other Roads

The checkerboard nature of the park boundary on Mount Desert Island and the multiple access points to park destination from non-park roads, including a network of state highways, causes safety, congestion, and management issues.



Gateway Center

The Acadia Gateway Center location in Trenton is home to a maintenance and garage facility for Island Explorer buses and is proposed to be an intercept parking facility for day-visitors and employees traveling to Mount Desert Island from the mainland.

TRANSPORTATION HOT SPOTS

Isle au Haut

- Managing visitor capacity

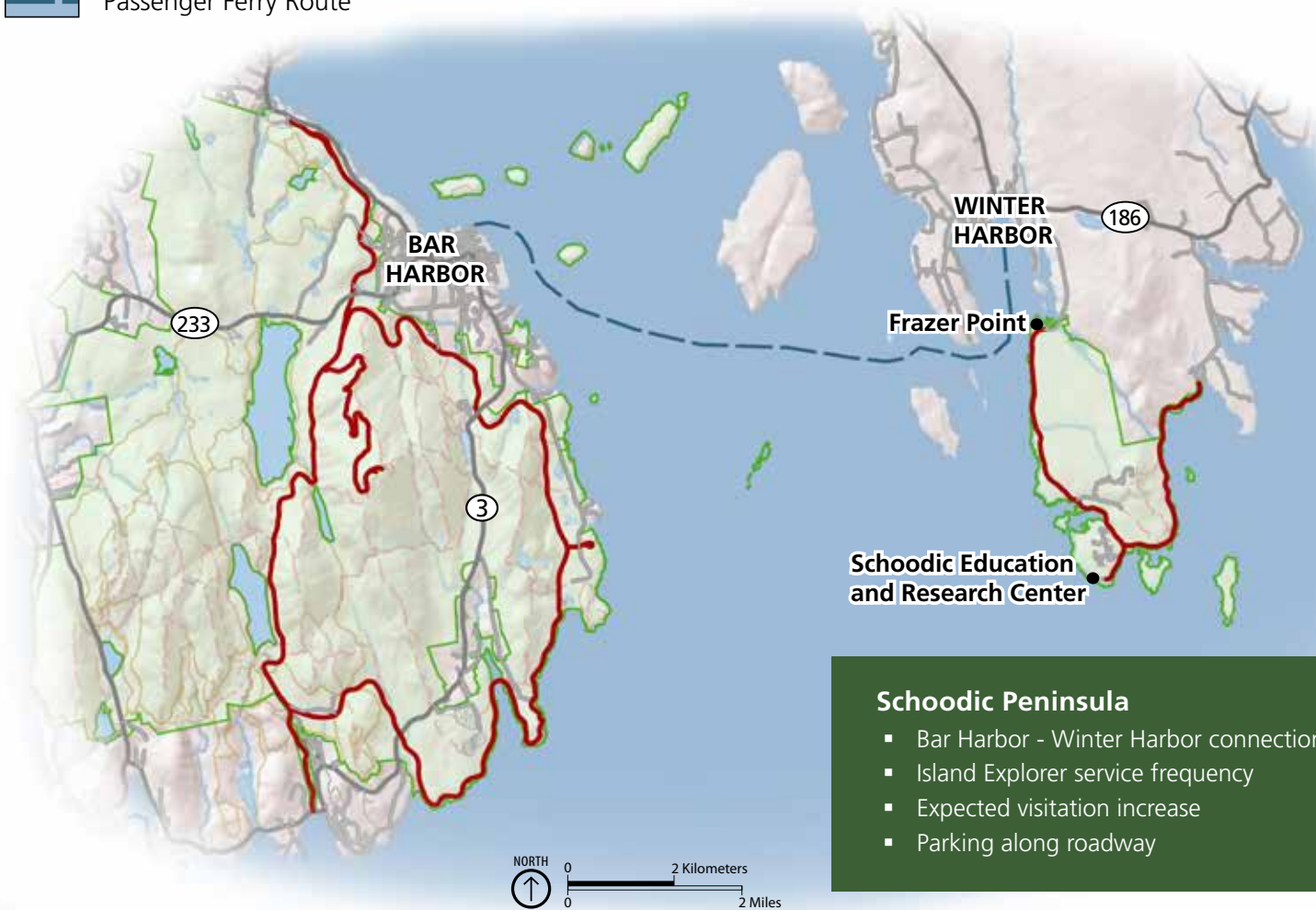
Duck Harbor Landing

- Legislated Fee Boundary
- Fee Owned Land
- Other Land
- Park Loop Road
- Other Roads
- Passenger Ferry Route



General Transportation Issues

- Parking exceeds demand in many parking lots during peak season
- Acadia Gateway Center and Halls Cove Visitor Center could be used to further improve operations and visitor experience
- Parking congestion at trailheads
- Roadway conflicts among vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- Commuter traffic along park roadways
- Large vehicle maneuvering—bridges and roads
- Right lane parking on Park Loop Road
- Informal parking along non-park roads
- Island Explorer system capacity



Schoodic Peninsula

- Bar Harbor - Winter Harbor connection
- Island Explorer service frequency
- Expected visitation increase
- Parking along roadway

A. Cadillac Mountain

- Car parking congestion
- Bus congestion
- Vehicle, pedestrian, and bicyclist conflicts along narrow, winding Cadillac Mountain Road

B. Sand Beach

- Car parking congestion
- Right lane parking
- High pedestrian activity on road

C. Thunder Hole

- Car and bus parking congestion
- High pedestrian activity crossing Park Loop Road

D. Jordan Pond House

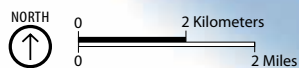
- Car and bus parking congestion

E. Acadia Mountain Parking Area

- Parking overflow onto State Route 102
- High pedestrian activity on the road

F. Wonderland and Ship Harbor Trailheads

- Parking congestion
- High vehicle speeds along roadway



The NPS wants to hear from **YOU!**

The park is looking for input from the public, including but not limited to the following questions:

- What parts of your Acadia experience do you value most?
- What transportation-related issues most interfere with your enjoyment of the park?
- What elements of the existing transportation system do you find helpful?
- What transportation-related improvements would you suggest the park implement and why?
- What else do you want to tell us about transportation within Acadia National Park?



HOW do I join the conversation?

We want to hear your concerns, impressions, and ideas about transportation in Acadia. Your input will help us identify issues and concerns, desired visitor experiences, as well as alternatives to consider in this plan.

You can submit your comments beginning **May 18, 2015**, through **August 3, 2015**, by scanning the code to the right (on page 7) with your smartphone or by visiting the planning website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ACADTransportationPlan>

You can also hand-deliver comments to Acadia National Park Headquarters or mail them to:

Acadia National Park
Attn: Transportation Plan
PO Box 177
Bar Harbor, ME 04609-0177



WHEN will the public meetings be held and WHERE?

Open houses will be held in June and July in the locations shown below (the content will be the same at all meetings). All meetings are open to everyone. We invite you to attend to share your concerns, impressions, and ideas.

JUNE Meetings		
Wednesday, June 3 , 2015	6:30–8 pm	Peninsula School (gymnasium) 71 Main Street Prospect Harbor, ME 04693
Thursday, June 4 , 2015	6:30–8 pm	Mount Desert Island High School (library) 1081 Eagle Lake Road Bar Harbor, ME 04609
JULY Meetings		
Wednesday, July 29 , 2015	6:30–8 pm	Mount Desert Island High School (library) 1081 Eagle Lake Road Bar Harbor, ME 04609
Thursday, July 30 , 2015	6:30–8 pm	Peninsula School (gymnasium) 71 Main Street Prospect Harbor, ME 04693
Comment period opens on MAY 18, 2015 and closes on AUGUST 3, 2015		

Where are we in the PLANNING PROCESS?

This project is in the early stages of planning. The chart below outlines the anticipated schedule for project milestones and additional opportunities for public review and input.

Milestone	Completion Date	Public Input
Public Scoping	Summer 2015	Review the newsletter, attend the open house, and provide your comments.
Develop a Range of Alternatives	Spring 2016	Review the preliminary alternatives newsletter, attend the open house, and provide your comments.
Prepare Draft Transportation Plan / Environmental Impact Statement	Summer 2017	Review the plan, attend an open house, and provide your comments.
Prepare Final Transportation Plan / Environmental Impact Statement	Winter 2017/2018	Stay up to date on the planning process at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ACADTransportationPlan
Prepare Record of Decision	Spring 2018	



@AcadiaNPS

WHO can you contact for more information?

John Kelly
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PO Box 177
Bar Harbor, ME 04609-0177
207-288-8703



National Park Service
US Department of the Interior

Acadia National Park
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