



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
P.O. BOX 129
GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA 86023-0129



May 16, 2007

D18 (GRCA 8217)

Subject: South Entrance Road Improvements at Grand Canyon National Park

Reference: Request for Comments on Proposal (Public Scoping)

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service (NPS) is in initial stages of planning to improve the South Entrance Road (Highway 64) between the community of Tusayan and the entrance station. The park will work collaboratively with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to address the proposed work in the ADOT right-of-way, south of the park boundary. The NPS proposes to construct up to two additional northbound lanes and an independent bypass on the east side of the highway to address long entrance station wait times.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of taking action is to provide a safe and effective system that addresses vehicle congestion at Grand Canyon National Park's south entrance. The project would facilitate enhanced visitor experiences and protect park resources. This project will not preclude future transportation systems from being implemented, including those that may be necessitated by substantial visitation increases.

The Grand Canyon receives more than four million South Rim visitors each year; most of whom arrive through the south entrance station. On a busy summer day south entrance wait times can easily exceed 40 minutes, and traffic is often backed up into the community of Tusayan. This congestion creates safety concerns for visitors entering the park by increasing potential for collisions; pedestrians in Tusayan when traffic backs up by increasing vehicle-pedestrian conflicts; and fee collection employees who are walking among waiting vehicles to answer questions and direct traffic. Other concerns include air quality from idling vehicles, and social trails and litter from people leaving their vehicles to enter adjacent wooded areas.

These concerns have necessitated separating South Entrance Road improvements from the larger transportation plan, which is currently underway and expected out for public review by October 2007. The proposed improvements described in this letter are a vital part of that plan but need to be addressed in a more timely manner to improve safety and visitor experience.

The primary *objectives* for South Entrance Road improvements are to:

1. Improve the entrance experience by reducing long entrance station waits;
2. Improve visitor, employee and resident safety at the entrance and on the two-mile entrance approach;

3. Ensure compatibility with future transportation options;
4. Cooperate with gateway communities, agencies, tribes, and other stakeholders to achieve mutual transportation goals.

Project Proposal: To meet the purpose and need for taking action and this project's objectives, the NPS has developed a preliminary project proposal which includes constructing two additional northbound lanes and an independent bypass lane that will be available to transit vehicles, employees and residents, and other users as determined by the NPS. The bypass lane would diverge from Highway 64 between the park boundary and park sign and would merge back onto the highway approximately 750 feet north of the south entrance station. The project area would reach from the turn off to the Tusayan Ranger Station to just north of the entrance station.

We Invite Your Comments: An Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed road improvements described above will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The National Park Service encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process. The public will have two opportunities to formally comment on the project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the Environmental Assessment. We are currently in the initial scoping phase of this project and invite you to submit comments.

Information on this project, and other planning efforts at Grand Canyon National Park, can be found on the park's website at www.nps.gov/grca/compliance. If you wish to submit any comments during this initial public scoping period we encourage you to do so online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>, select the link for the South Entrance Road Improvements project. Comments may also be mailed to the Superintendent at the address below. This initial public scoping period will be open for 30 days ending June 17, 2007.

Before including your address, telephone 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.

We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety. The public scoping period will open May 17 and will close June 17, 2007. If you wish to submit comments on proposed South Entrance Road improvements please do so by this date.

Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park
Attn: Office of Planning and Compliance
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

We appreciate your input on this project. If you have any questions, please call Jill Beshears or Grace Ellis, Project Planning Leaders, at (928) 638-7794 or (928) 226-0159 respectively or Vicky Stinson, Project Manager, at (928) 774-3026.

Sincerely,

/s/ Steve Martin

Steve Martin
Superintendent

Enclosures (1)

If you would like to receive a hard copy of the environmental document for this project, you may so indicate when commenting on the PEPC website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> or contact Rachel Stanton at the address above, at (928) 774-9612, or at rachel_stanton@nps.gov, and one will be sent to you during the comment period. If you do not so indicate, a hard copy of the environmental document will not be sent to you. However, please be aware that this environmental document and other environmental documents are routinely available for your review at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>.