UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NORTHEAST REGION

RECORD OF DECISION

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Acadia National Park

Maine

INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS), has prepared this Record of Decision (ROD) for the *Acadia National Park Transportation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (Final Plan/EIS), December 2018. This Record of Decision identifies the decision/selected action, including mitigation measures; describes other alternatives analyzed; identifies the environmentally preferable alternative; and includes rationale for the decision reached. In accordance with NPS policy, a non-impairment determination for the selected action is attached to this Record of Decision (attachment A). Complete references for in-text citations in the Record of Decision and non-impairment determination are in the Final Plan/EIS.

BACKGROUND

The popularity of Acadia National Park is growing, with visitation rising by 59% between 2007 and 2017. Most visitation occurs between June and October, with popular destinations including Cadillac Mountain, sites along the Ocean Drive corridor, and Jordan Pond. Most visitors arrive via motor vehicle and must access their desired destinations via the park's historic roads. Additionally, driving the park's scenic transportation corridors is a popular activity and a character-defining feature of the historic loop road. However, the park's transportation infrastructure was constructed in the early 20th century and consists of narrow, twisting historic roads and low, narrow historic bridges that were designed for automobile types, speeds, and volumes different than those of today. In addition, the number of designated parking spaces along Park Loop Road and elsewhere in the park is not sufficient to meet visitor demand. With over 3.5 million visits concentrated in a short season, it is impossible to meet demand for accessing park features (especially parking spaces) without significant resource impacts, increased transportation-related risks, and adversely impacting the visitor experience and visitor access opportunities. Today's increased automobile traffic volumes—combined with an increasing number of visitors choosing to travel the park roads by walking, bicycle, recreational

vehicle (RV), and commercial bus—have created safety issues, resource protection concerns, and impacts on visitor enjoyment of the park.

The overarching purpose of the plan is to outline a comprehensive approach to providing safe and efficient transportation to visitors to Acadia National Park, while ensuring that park resources and values are protected and visitors are able to enjoy a variety of high-quality experiences.

Overall, this plan will improve safety on park roads; reduce conflicts among oversize vehicles (e.g., buses, RVs, campers), motorcycles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and passenger cars; reduce crowding and congestion at key visitor destinations, access points, and travel corridors; identify transportation infrastructure improvements to increase safety and enhance resource stewardship; and provide guidance on managing commercial services. The plan also seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Establish desired conditions for natural and cultural resources and visitor experience at destinations and travel corridors throughout the park (see chapter 1 of the final environmental impact statement).
- Adopt strategies to address parking and roadway capacity limitations and associated impacts on resources, safety, and visitor experience.
- Establish guidance to improve safety and reduce conflicts among oversize vehicles (e.g., buses, RVs, campers), motorcycles, bicyclists, and passenger cars operating on park roads.
- Clarify how the scale, design, and function of the Acadia Gateway Center and Hulls Cove Visitor Center can help mitigate crowding and congestion, improve visitor orientation, increase compliance with park entrance passes, manage road-based commercial tours, and support the Island Explorer public transit service.
- Improve visitor orientation, increase compliance with park entrance passes, manage road-based commercial tours, and support the Island Explorer public transit service.

The plan will provide a means for the National Park Service to implement the following:

- Partner with local communities and the State of Maine to address local and regional transportation-related issues, sustainable public transit service, and enhanced cultural and natural resource protection.
- Incorporate into the park's transportation planning efforts those of neighboring communities with regard to Island Explorer service enhancements and potential projects such as reuse of the Bar Harbor ferry terminal and the proposed parking solutions in downtown Bar Harbor.

DECISION (SELECTED ACTION)

After consideration of the concerns and issues raised during the planning and environmental impact analysis process and all public comments received—and in light of applicable laws, regulations, and NPS guidance—the National Park Service has selected alternative C for implementation. Alternative C was identified as the NPS-preferred alternative in the Final Plan/EIS. The selected action will become effective upon approval of the Record of Decision by the NPS Northeast Regional Director.

SUMMARY OF THE SELECTED ACTION

The emphasis of the selected action is to balance preservation and safe public use and enjoyment by implementing new management of specific high-demand areas within Acadia National Park. A timed-entry reservation system will initially be implemented incrementally for the Ocean Drive corridor, Cadillac Summit Road, and the Jordan Pond House North Lot during peak use season (from mid-June to mid-October). During initial implementation of the plan, all other Acadia parking lots will continue to be managed on a first-come, first-served basis. Park managers will continue to monitor traffic and resource conditions elsewhere in the park. If monitoring indicates traffic or resource conditions have worsened beyond acceptable thresholds, access to Island Explorer routes entering the park and other areas may be added to the reservation system. See "Appendix A: Indicators, Thresholds, and Visitor Capacity" of the final environmental impact statement for a description of the management framework the park will use to monitor traffic and resource conditions.

In addition to implementation of the adaptive reservation system, other key changes from current management under the selected action include the following:

- Right-lane parking along Park Loop Road will be retained in the near term but eventually phased out as other options and parking become available.
- The existing parking lot and restroom on the north side of State Route (SR) 233 at Eagle Lake will be removed and a new, larger parking lot will be constructed south of the highway at an NPS maintenance storage yard known as Liscomb Pit.
- Additional parking will be provided at Hulls Cove, and the visitor center will be redesigned and relocated on site, but on grade with the parking lot.
- Visitor services at the Thompson Island Information Center (on the west side of SR 3) will be removed and the area restored to natural conditions once the Acadia Gateway Center becomes operational.

The following provides a list of key strategies and details of the selected action, including actions described in the final environmental impact statement as common to all action alternatives. More details on the selected action can be found in chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement under the headings "Actions Common to All Action Alternatives" and "Alternative C: Corridor Management (Preferred Alternative and Proposed Action)."

Management of Park Loop Road

- Parking-related traffic congestion on Park Loop Road will be managed through establishing a timed-entry vehicle parking permit system for the heavily congested Ocean

Drive corridor (between the Sand Beach Entrance Station and Otter Cliffs Road), Cadillac Summit Road, and the Jordan Pond House North Lot. The Jordan Pond House South Lot will continue to be managed for restaurant access by the concessioner under the existing concession contract.

- The reservation system will be in place during peak season and peak operating hours, but will be flexible based upon visitor use patterns and availability of public transit.
- The numbers of reservations available will correspond with management actions needed to manage the identified visitor capacities.
- The reservations only apply to motor vehicles and not pedestrians or bicycles.
- A percentage of reservations will be held aside for short-term arrivals. Unallocated advance reservations and no-shows will be added to the short-term reservation pool.
- Reservations for parking permits will be made online, with alternatives available at in key locations, including park visitor contact stations at the Village Green, Hulls Cove Visitor Center, and Acadia Gateway Center (when completed).
- Timed-entry reservations will not restrict length of stay, only time of entry.
- Reservations will be valid only when accompanied by an entrance pass.
- Operation of the reservation system will be funded through a new service charge and/or a transportation fee associated with the reservation.
- After initial implementation of the reservation system, the number of reservations will be adjusted to ensure the highest possible use of the existing parking supply. Adjustments will be continuously made to allow park staff to manage to desired conditions and within related thresholds and identified visitor capacities, while avoiding parking-related congestion.
- Adaptive management of the reservation system may involve adding parking lots off of Park Loop Road to the reservation system, expanding the days of the year or time of the day that reservations are required, or extending the reservation to the entire Park Loop Road.
- Expanding the Island Explorer to meet visitor demands for access is a critical component of all action alternatives. Park managers will continue to promote the availability and expansion of Island Explorer service in the park.
- Increased information will be provided to visitors, both before they arrive at the park and upon arrival. An education strategy will be developed that includes mobile and online information and signage explaining reservation requirements, information on trip planning and orientation, and reservation availability.
- During the active reservation season, the number of commercial passenger vehicles allowed within reservation corridors at one time will be managed to ensure desired conditions are maintained and visitor capacities at the park's primary attractions are not exceeded. This will occur through requirements established in their operating conditions specified in their contract(s).
- Park-approved activity-based experiences operating under commercial use authorizations will be permitted throughout the park, but will be required to use vehicles that fit in a standard parking space. Access to standard parking spaces within the reservation corridors for these commercial operators will be managed through the operating requirements specified in their operating agreements.
- The park will facilitate the use of on-demand ride services.

- Only vehicles that are consistent with the dimensions of the park's historic roads and bridges will be permitted to operate on Park Loop Road. These requirements will be phased in over several years. No vehicles greater than 38 feet in length and 11 feet 8 inches in height will be permitted to operate on Park Loop Road. Height and length restrictions already in place for other areas of the park will remain unchanged as well as those already in place for RVs would remain unchanged.
- Right-lane parking along Park Loop Road will be reduced over several years and eventually phased out as other options—such as expanded Island Explorer service, park-and-ride options, new parking locations, on-demand transportation services, and commercial tours and shuttles—become more available.

Infrastructure Changes Required to Implement the Reservation System

- The Sand Beach parking lot will be reconfigured to provide three to four parking spaces for commercial tour vehicles meeting new size requirements.
- Great Head Road will be closed to vehicle traffic, and the existing trails will be improved to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to Park Loop Road.
- Initial management of the reservation system at Cadillac Summit Road and at the Jordan Pond House North Lot will be handled through temporary or mobile reservation validation gates and staff members. If through monitoring of conditions, the National Park Service determines that managing parking congestion at these sites is effective, a more permanent reservation validation infrastructure will be developed, possibly including a queuing lane and reservation validation gate near the base of the road Cadillac Summit Road, and a similar reservation validation gate or a self-serve reservation validation at Jordan Pond House. The National Park Service will partner with the private sector to ensure the best available technology is used in implementing this plan.
- Signage designed to maintain consistency with the historic character of Park Loop Road will be placed to notify visitors when they are approaching a reservation-only area.

Management of Other Mount Desert Island Park Attractions and Trailheads

- The existing parking lot and restroom on the north side of SR 233 at Eagle Lake will be removed and a new larger parking lot will be constructed south of the highway at an NPS maintenance storage yard known as Liscomb Pit. Parking at the boat launch on the south side of SR 233 will remain, but will be reserved for vehicles launching trailered and hand-carried watercraft.
- The access road (Liscomb Pit Road) from Eagle Lake Road (SR 233) to the new lot will be widened by approximately 10 feet and improved—directional and warning signs will be installed to ensure safety.
- The maintenance stockpiles and vehicle storage at Liscomb Pit will be relocated to an abandoned section of Eagle Lake Road adjacent to park headquarters, an existing storage area, known as Satterlee Pit, near the south end of Schooner Head Road, or another previously disturbed area.

Hulls Cove, Acadia Gateway Center, and Thompson Island

- Additional parking, doubling current capacity, will be provided at Hulls Cove, and a new visitor center will be built at grade with the parking lot. The new visitor center will serve as the primary visitor contact and orientation point for the park, as well as a transportation hub.
- The National Park Service will continue to support full completion of the Acadia Gateway Center (as described in the Acadia Gateway Center Environmental Assessment), including phases 3 and 4 (subject to implementation funding).
- The visitor services at the Thompson Island Information Center (on the west side of SR 3) will be removed and most of the area restored to natural conditions. These services will be relocated to the Acadia Gateway Center in Trenton, Maine, once funding is available to complete this facility.

Schoodic Peninsula

- The Schoodic Peninsula will continue to be managed as outlined in the 2005 Schoodic general management plan amendment, which calls for a low-density visitor experience, retaining opportunities for solitude and quiet.
  - Parking will continue to be allowed in designated areas on a first-come, first-served basis.
  - An accessible pedestrian trail will be installed between the Schoodic Institute campus and Schoodic Point.
  - Park managers will work with partners and local communities to provide an opportunity for bike rentals and other necessary and appropriate commercially provided visitor services.
  - Circulation, parking, and accessibility will initially remain as it is currently managed. If monitoring indicates traffic or resource conditions have worsened beyond acceptable thresholds, park managers may choose to
    - deploy additional electronic signage to provide visitors with information on status of parking lots
    - modify Island Explorer access
    - increase enforcement of endorsed parking only
    - require park-and-ride/bicycle use from the day use lot when Schoodic Loop Road reaches specified capacity
    - extend the reservation system to manage vehicle access

Mitigation Measures Incorporated into the Selected Action

A number of mitigation measures will be implemented as part of the selected action to protect park resources and reduce the risk of injury to employees and park visitors during implementation of the selected action. These measures, described in the *Acadia National Park Final Transportation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (see appendix D), cover general construction; sustainability; climate change; wildlife and wildlife habitat; federal listed wildlife species; vegetation; wetlands and floodplains; soils; air quality; historic structures, sites, and

cultural landscapes; archeological resources; visual resources; quality of visitor experience; and health and safety. The following mitigations are integral to the selected action's implementation:

- In accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, all new construction within or adjacent to historic sites, districts, and cultural landscapes will be compatible in terms of architectural elements, scale, massing, materials, and other character-defining features.
- New construction will be carried out in accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.
- To minimize the visual and auditory intrusions on cultural resources from new development, screening or other sensitive design measures will be used that are compatible with historic resources and cultural landscapes.
- As appropriate, archeological surveys or monitoring prior to any ground disturbance will be conducted. Archeological resources would be left undisturbed and preserved in a stable condition to prevent degradation and loss of research values unless intervention could be justified based on compelling research, interpretation, site protection, or park development needs. Recovered archeological materials and associated records would be treated in accordance with 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 79, NPS Management Policies 2006, and the NPS Museum Handbook. During construction, significant archeological resources would be avoided to the greatest extent possible. If such resources could not be avoided or are inadvertently discovered, an appropriate mitigation strategy (e.g., the excavation, recordation, and mapping of cultural remains prior to disturbance) will be developed in consultation with the Maine State Historic Preservation Office and, as necessary, associated American Indian tribes. The mitigation strategy will ensure that important archeological data is recovered and documented.
- Adverse impacts on cultural resources will be avoided to the extent possible in accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.
- New development will be designed, sited, and constructed to avoid or minimize visual intrusions to historic and natural scenes. Additional compliance may be necessary.
- The northern long-eared bat (Myotis septentrionalis) is present in Acadia National Park and is federally listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Appropriate conservation measures such as avoidance of critical habitat and seasonal restrictions on activities will be implemented in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- During development, fill materials will be obtained from a park-approved source, approved by the park biologist. Borrow and aggregate materials from sources outside the park will be inspected to avoid importation of nonnative plants.
- When construction is ended prior to a winter season, all disturbed areas and soil stockpiles will be protected from snowmelt impacts by using erosion control best management practices for subsoil and soil conservation practices for topsoil.

- Development will be designed to restore stream connectivity and natural hydrological flows and ensure that stream and wetland crossings and culverts are designed for the natural movement of fish and aquatic wildlife.
- New infrastructure will be designed and built to address increased storm intensities and flows related to a rapidly changing climate.
- As appropriate, wetland resources will be protected through identification, avoidance, and minimization of impact during development. During work, measures to keep construction materials from escaping into stream, drainages and wetlands will be taken.
- The facilities, programs, and services of the National Park Service and its partners will be accessible to and usable by all people, including people with disabilities. This policy is based on the commitment to provide access to the widest cross-section of the public and to ensure compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act (42 United States Code [USC] 4151 et seq.) and the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 701 et seq.).

In addition to these mitigation measures, a number of best management practices and monitoring guidelines are incorporated into the selected action (see appendix D in the Final Plan/EIS).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT SELECTED

ALTERNATIVE A (NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE)

The no-action alternative would continue current management (as outlined in the park's general management plan) and provides a basis for comparing the other alternatives. There would be no major changes from current operations, and changes that did occur would be on a reactionary, not proactive, basis. The park's transportation system would continue to support mobility and access on foot and by bicycle, Island Explorer bus, and private and commercial motor vehicles. Management of park visitors would continue to vary seasonally as visitor demand and needs change, with many management strategies focusing on the peak season between mid-June and mid-October. Throughout the park, the physical capacity of roads and designated parking lots would be generally unchanged. Parking would remain available to all users on a first-come, first-served basis and right-lane parking would continue to occur, but restrictions and prohibitions may be implemented when needed. Physical changes to roads and parking would be limited and related to safety, accessibility, resource protection, and accommodating alternative transportation, not to capacity. Temporary or permanent closures of roads and parking areas would occur when necessary to address safety and security concerns or to ensure the financial sustainability of the overall transportation system.

Additional key actions include the following:

- The Hulls Cove Visitor Center would continue to accommodate current uses with no expansion of parking or other site amenities. The Acadia Gateway Center would be developed and operated as described in the Acadia Gateway Center Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).
- Development of the Acadia Gateway Center into a regional tourism hub with expanded parking and public transit opportunities would continue to be supported by the park and park partners.
- The park's transportation system on the Schoodic Peninsula would continue to be managed to support low-density recreational use and provide alternatives to the use of private vehicles.
- Island Explorer would continue to be provided during the peak season to the degree funding allows. Designated parking for Island Explorer would continue to be provided.

(For more details see pages 21–23 in the Final Plan/EIS.)

ALTERNATIVE B

This alternative would address transportation and congestion issues by establishing a reservation system for parking at five of the primary attractions and trailheads along Park Loop Road during peak times and seasons, and eliminating right-lane parking to improve transit safety and ease. Parking reservations would be required at Cadillac Mountain, Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Jordan Pond House, and Sieur de Monts. Gates and queuing lanes would be constructed where needed to validate reservations and to control access on some first-come, first-served lots.

Additional key actions include the following:

- The existing parking lot at Eagle Lake initially would remain as a first-come, first-served parking lot with the addition of an automated gate to restrict access when the lot is full.
- Additional parking would be provided at Hulls Cove, and the visitor center would be redesigned and relocated.
- Visitor services at the Thompson Island Information Center (on the west side of SR 3) would no longer be needed after construction of the Acadia Gateway Center in Trenton, Maine. These services would be relocated to the Gateway Center and the structures would be repurposed for other uses.

(For more details see pages 29–33 in the Final Plan/EIS.)

ALTERNATIVE D

This alternative emphasizes management of the entire Park Loop Road. It would provide a systemwide approach to manage vehicle volumes on Park Loop Road during the peak use season. Exit-only gates would be installed at most access points to Park Loop Road and automated exit and entry gates would be installed at SR 233, Otter Cliff Road, Sieur de Monts, and Schooner Head Road. Two new entry stations—near Wildwood Stables and on Paradise Hill Road—would become the primary access for private vehicles holding reservations to enter Park Loop Road. A timed-entry reservation system would be established for vehicle access to Park Loop Road during the peak use season. Once a visitor passes through an entrance station or automated gate during their reserved entry window, all parking lots on Park Loop Road would be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Under this alternative, most of Park Loop Road, including Lower Mountain Road, would be one way in a counterclockwise direction and most right-lane parking would be eliminated. The counterclockwise flow would be a reversal of direction on the current one-way sections of the road.

Additional key actions include the following:

- Most right-lane parking would be eliminated.
- Most entrances to Park Loop Road would be converted to exit-only, new entrance stations would be built near Wildwood Stables and on Paradise Hill Road, and the Sand Beach entrance station would be removed.
- The existing parking lot and restroom on the north side of SR 233 at Eagle Lake would be removed and a new larger parking lot would be constructed south of the highway along an abandoned section of SR 233.
- A new parking lot accommodating approximately 40 vehicles would be established within the footprint of an existing NPS administrative storage area known as Satterlee Pit near the south end of Schooner Head Road.
- At Hulls Cove, the existing visitor center would be removed and a small visitor contact station would be rebuilt closer to an expanded Hulls Cove parking lot.
- The Acadia Gateway Center would serve as the park's primary visitor center.

- Visitor services at the Thompson Island Information Center (on the west side of SR 3) would no longer be needed after construction of the Acadia Gateway Center in Trenton, Maine. These services would be relocated to the Gateway Center and the structures would be repurposed for other uses.

(For more details see pages 42–47 in the Final Plan/EIS.)

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION REACHED

In reaching the decision to select alternative C for implementation, the National Park Service evaluated each alternative based on how well it met the NPS statutory mission and responsibility, met the purpose and need for taking action, preserved the area's fundamental resources and values, affected park resources and visitor experiences, and other factors (e.g., cost, feasibility, and stakeholder interest).

The National Park Service selected alternative C because the selected action best addresses the purpose and need of the plan. All of the alternatives presented a reservation system for private vehicles for managing overcrowding and congestion at peak times during peak season at popular destinations in Acadia National Park. The adaptive system selected for implementation best protects park resources while maximizing the current capacity of the park's roads and parking lots. It allows the park to adapt to changing visitor pressures and associated impacts to park resources, and initially involves few physical impacts in terms of development of modern infrastructure that degrade the historic and scenic setting of the park. All of the action alternatives presented in the final environmental impact statement had the potential to reduce conflicts between oversize vehicles and motorcycles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and passenger cars, as all action alternatives provide for identical new size requirements on oversized vehicles that ensure they fit the historic geometry of the park roads. However, the selected alternative best meets that need via the eventual phase out of right-lane parking (also in alternative B) and the establishment of adaptive corridor-access reservations that will reduce crowding and congestion at key visitor destinations, access points, and travel corridors while still maximizing the capacity of individual locations and allowing visitors to effectively plan for an uncrowded experience. The selected action also identifies the most effective locations for development of new transportation infrastructure (including expanded parking options at Eagle Lake and Hulls Cove), as well as the most cost-effective use of existing development already present along Park Loop Road (use of the existing Sand Beach entrance station for reservation validations for the Ocean Drive corridor). In addition, alternative C best addresses the following plan goals as identified in chapter 1 of the final environmental impact statement:

- **Adopt strategies to address parking and roadway capacity limitations and associated impacts on resources, safety, and visitor experience.**

  Implementing a timed-entry traffic management system for the most heavily visited corridors and parking lots of Park Loop Road allows the park to control congestion in heavily visited sites while maintaining spontaneity of access in other locations not on the reservation system. It will also allow the park to use existing infrastructure at Sand Beach (i.e., the existing entrance station) to process reservations. The adaptive management strategy that is a part of alternative C will allow the park to monitor the effectiveness of the reservation system and adapt it to meet resources and visitor experience needs if necessary. Time-limited reservations for parking only (alternative B) would do little to control congestion within the travel corridors, and immediately implementing a reservation system for the entire Park Loop Road (alternative D) would not maximize the current capacity of the system, and would require greater initial infrastructure changes.

  Throughout the planning process, several options to manage the increasing visitation to the park were proposed as alternates to a reservation system. In all cases, these proposals were not viable or ran contrary to the preservation of the fundamental values of the park

and the intended visitor experience. Reservations are necessary to help visitors plan their trips, to ensure quality visitor experience, to protect resources threatened by overcrowding, and to ensure that the park will remain accessible to all. Additionally, the adaptive management component of the selected reservation system enables the park to quickly and nimbly adjust to changing conditions for parking supply and demand.

By actively managing the most congested corridors and lots within the park, the visitor experiences of the transportation systems, as well as locations along these routes, are enhanced. Though it segments the flow of the historic design of the loop road, implementing this system for the most congested areas during the most congested times/seasons protects quality experiences within those time ranges without overly limiting spontaneous arrival (in some locations) or length of stay (in all locations).

- **Establish guidance to improve safety and reduce conflicts among oversize vehicles (e.g., buses, RVs, campers), motorcycles, bicyclists, and passenger cars operating on park roads.**

  The selected action best accomplishes this planning goal through the eventual elimination of right-lane parking on Park Loop Road and limits on the size of vehicles able to operate on Park Loop Road.

  Previous planning efforts, including the 1992 general management plan, have called for the elimination of right-lane parking to increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists and to restore the historic and scenic driving experience of Park Loop Road. The selected alternative calls for the eventual discontinuation of right-lane parking and the restoration of two lanes of traffic throughout the entirety of Park Loop Road. However, the park's existing parking infrastructure is undersized in relation to visitor capacity and the number of visitors that can be supported in most locations. Right-lane parking is currently a necessary component of the parking strategy in the absence of additional parking outside of Park Loop Road and enhanced park and ride, public transportation, and commercial options. Right-lane parking will be phased out as these new options come on board, and in the meantime, temporary lane and parking striping will be established to immediately improve safety. Although alternative B also proposes the elimination of right-lane parking, the fact that it does little to eliminate congestion in travel corridors in means that safety conflicts would likely persist.

  In order to protect the integrity of the park's historic motor roads and their associated infrastructure (shoulders and bridges), as well as to improve safety for all travelers along park roads, the selected action includes the phase-in of vehicle size requirements to ensure that all motor vehicles traveling on park roads will fit safely within the road corridors. In addition to protecting the fundamental historic resources of the park, these size limits will also improve visitor safety by allowing for more space to share the road with pedestrians and bicyclists and will reduce the risk of vehicle collisions associated with oversize vehicles that are unable to navigate tight turns or pass under bridges while remaining in their travel lane.

  Bicycle access is not restricted by the selected action, nor are bicyclists required to obtain reservations for access to any part of the park. The reduction and eventual elimination of right-lane parking as well as restrictions on vehicle size are expected to improve the safety and comfort of operation of bicycles within the park.

- **Enact improvements to transportation infrastructure to increase safety and enhance resource stewardship, sustainability, and NPS operational efficiency, while maintaining the integrity of the historic character of the park.**

  The selected action proposes new parking lot construction that will increase safety, and improve resource stewardship. At Eagle Lake, the selected action includes relocating the existing parking lot and comfort station adjacent to SR 233 to a new and expanded lot to the south at what is now a maintenance storage yard known as Liscomb Pit. This action increases the parking capacity at the site, allows for the restoration of an important wetland ecosystem, and removes a dangerous situation associated with roadside parking along a high speed highway and the need for visitors to cross the road after parking. The development of a new lot, as opposed to gating the existing lot as proposed under alternative B, is preferable because allowing the lot to remain in its current location would continue to provide an attractive nuisance that encourages unsafe and out-of-bounds parking adjacent to the highway, and would continue to impact the adjacent wetlands. The new lot will also incorporate a new connector trail to the adjacent carriage road, so as to ensure that visitors using the lot have safe and convenient access to the carriage road, protecting an important visitor experience.

  The selected action also includes a commitment to expanding opportunities for public transportation (Island Explorer), encouraging the use of on-demand app-based ride sharing opportunities, and providing an opportunity for commercial transportation (tours). These enhanced means of access to the park in ways other than driving and parking a personal vehicle will reduce congestion in lots and provide alternative means of access for visitors who are unable to secure reservations at their time or day of choice. In addition to the expanded parking at Eagle lake, additional parking capacity will be created at Hulls Cove and eventually at the Acadia Gateway Center. These new lots will further enhance opportunities for park-and-ride options and will reduce private vehicle congestion-related impacts on historic park resources.

  The selected action will not hinder NPS operational efficiency, particularly in ease of enforcement of the new reservation system. Unlike alternative B, which would pose a drain on agency staff required to patrol lots and ticket vehicles that overstay their reservations, the selected alternative only manages when vehicles enter the reservation corridors. The reduction of traffic congestion within lots and corridors under the reservation system will also increase NPS operational efficiency in terms of response times to emergencies and ability to access heavily visited areas in a timely manner.

  The selected action calls for working with local governments, the Maine Department of Transportation, and other stakeholders to identify an alternative, off-highway option to remedy current unsafe parking conditions along SR 102 Acadia Mountain. The selected action does not provide specifics of the new parking lot design, placement, or construction at Acadia Mountain, nor at park attractions and trailheads elsewhere on Mount Desert Island (though the adaptive management structure of the selected action will allow consideration of other lot construction in areas that are not historic landscapes or components of Park Loop Road). Some of these areas currently experience periodic congestion pressures, but because these pressures are likely to change as park managers implement the reservation system, the selected action calls for an adaptive management strategy in which park managers would monitor changes to visitor use and traffic patterns and adjust accordingly. This adaptive quality best meets

the needs of the plan by providing the flexibility to respond to changing pressures. Such adjustments could include adding locations to the reservation system or making modifications or additions to parking infrastructure. Prior to implementation of these options, site-specific planning and applicable compliance would be completed.

- **Clarify how the scale, design, and function of the Acadia Gateway Center and Hulls Cove Visitor Center can help mitigate crowding and congestion, improve visitor orientation, increase compliance with park entrance passes, manage road-based commercial tours, and support the Island Explorer public transit service.**

  Continued support of the full build-out of the Acadia Gateway Center in Trenton, Maine is a component of the selected alternative. The full implementation of the selected action requires the additional services and parking infrastructure proposed in phase 3 and 4 of the 2007 *Acadia Gateway Center Environmental Assessment,* in order to accommodate park-and-ride visitation and relieve parking pressure on the park. However, because the selected action also calls for the expansion of parking and a redesign of the Hulls Cove visitor center, it is able to ensure that visitor orientation, compliance with park entrance passes, management of road-based commercial tours, and support of the Island Explorer public transit is manageable within the park, regardless of the time frame necessary to achieve the build out of the Acadia Gateway Center.

  A component of the selected action is increasing the number of available parking spaces needed for accessing the park and to improve visitor experience associated with transportation and access. The substantially expanded parking lot at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center and the redesign, expansion, and relocation of the visitor center within the Hulls Cove area will serve this purpose. The new lot will be better designed to manage buses associated with both Island Explorer and commercial-based tours. The new visitor center will be at grade with the parking lot, improving accessibility over its current positioning 50 feet in elevation above the existing lot. The new visitor center's increased size will accommodate enhanced programming and improved wayfinding, and will allow the center to serve as a transportation hub for park and ride visitors transferring to alternate means of accessing Park Loop Road.