

Summer 2020 Civic Engagement Summary Report

**Nisqually to Paradise Road Corridor Management Plan
Mount Rainier National Park
Draft: February 2021**

Executive Summary

From August 10, 2020, through October 5, 2020, the National Park Service held a civic engagement series where the public was invited to provide input on issues and opportunities for future visitor use at Mount Rainier National Park.

To introduce the planning effort, a variety of print and digital media platforms were used to reach out to the public throughout the months of August and September. These publications highlighted key issues, the planning timeline, prompting questions and information on how to participate. Printed media including newsletters, postcards, and flyers were widely distributed throughout the park, at key locations in the region, and made available on the project website (<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/NisquallyCorridor>). Information was also publicized on social media, including the park's Facebook page and Twitter and Instagram accounts. These publications identified the length of the comment period, dates, times, and a virtual platform link to the public listening session.

National Park Service staff hosted both a civic engagement session and stakeholder forums to provide interested members of the public an opportunity to learn more about the planning effort and share their feedback. The first session was held on Tuesday, September 1, and the second, which targeted specific stakeholders, was held Tuesday, September 15. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, these sessions were held virtually through the Microsoft Teams – Event platform. A total of 81 people attended the first public listening session. A recording of the public session was also made available through the park's social media platforms. At the close of the comment period on October 5, more than 1,000 correspondences had been received.

While the full breadth of comments received is summarized within this comment summary report, the following themes appeared in the correspondences. Commenters shared that when it comes to experiences in the Nisqually Corridor, they value opportunities for solitude, access to recreation opportunities, interpretation, scenic views, views and experiences of natural resources, and the opportunity to experience and learn about cultural resources. Commenters also shared some of the conditions that interfere with their experiences. These commenters expressed frustration and dissatisfaction related to crowding on trails and at attraction sites; traffic congestion (at entrance station, on roadways, and in parking lots); impacts to alpine meadow and other natural resources; high competition for facilities, services, and overnight accommodations; and staff shortages.

Comments also included a range of strategies suggested by the public to address issues and help achieve the project goals. Broadly, these include strategies to help disperse visitors (within the park and regionally), improve visitor and vehicle flow, and more actively manage the number of vehicles and visitors in the park.

Regardless of perspective, there was a general agreement among those who commented that the primary issues articulated by the National Park Service were also issues for visitors and interfered with their visits to the park. Moving forward, these outcomes will begin to inform the next steps in the corridor management plan's development. Comments received related to the identification of key issues during this review period will set the foundation for discussions related to strategy development in the coming months.

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Summer 2020 Civic Engagement Series

Engagement

A virtual meeting was organized as the primary engagement and information gathering opportunity for the public. It took place on Tuesday, September 1, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (PST). A Microsoft Teams Event platform hosted the event and an additional phone line was provided for participants who preferred to call into the session. A total of 81 participants joined the meeting and a recording, which was later posted through the park's YouTube channel, received an additional 500 views by April 2021. The presentation featured introductions from National Park Service staff; a digital slide presentation covering the scope, structure, and goals of the project; an introduction on how to submit comments; and a live question and answer session.

An additional virtual meeting was held on Tuesday, September 15, to directly engage key stakeholders. The same core elements of the broader public presentation were shared. Participants included representatives from organizations such as Conservation Northwest, National Parks Conservation Association, Nisqually River Council, and Visit Rainier.

Outreach

Park leadership and staff made a concerted effort to approach outreach for this plan through a particularly robust and inclusive lens. There was and continues to be a clear recognition and appreciation of the role and responsibility the park holds within the context of the Pacific Northwest, the valuable network of adjacent public lands, the local communities that are inextricably connected to management decisions carried out by the park, and the public who endow the stewardship of these lands upon these managing entities. Information on project details, additional resources, the public presentation, and where to comment were thoughtfully and broadly distributed.

[Outreach was conducted both in person and through online platforms. Printed postcards and newsletters were distributed to visitors \(available in both English and Spanish\) and fliers were posted in key visitor engagement sites at the park. Online outreach occurred via the park's Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter pages. All outreach materials informed visitors about this planning effort and welcomed public input.](#) All materials to support the civic engagement series (story map, meeting notices, newsletters) were hosted on the project homepage at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/NisquallyCorridor>.

Correspondence Received

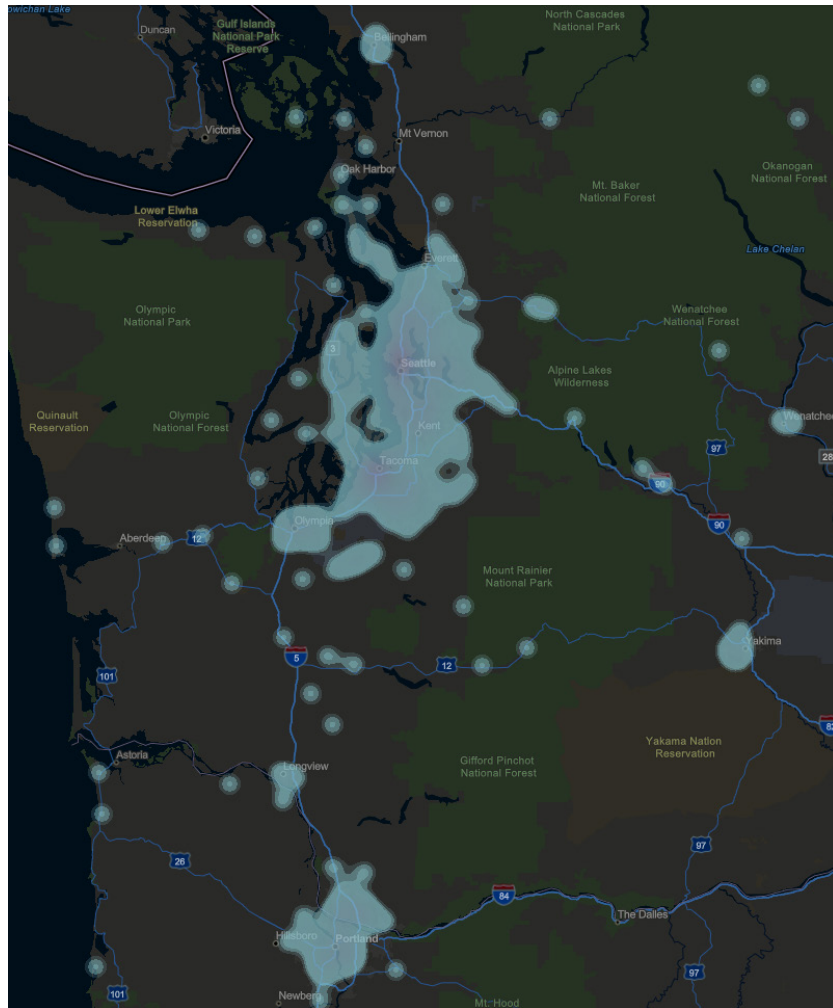
During the public scoping period, which ran from August 10, 2020, through October 5, 2020, the park received 1,125 individual correspondences through email, directly in the PEPC system, or through mail correspondence. Comments were collected from the public and other stakeholders during this phase of civic engagement to understand the public's perspectives on key issues and preliminary management strategies related to transportation and visitor use management at Mount Rainier National Park.

Within this planning process, thoughts and ideas from individuals, organizations, and agencies were analyzed and considered equally. For this reason, the unique content of comments, rather than the number of times a comment was received, will be used to guide the development of a range of reasonable management strategies for the plan. This report summarizes all public comments received during this comment period.

The following map illustrates the geographic distribution and number of public comments that were submitted directly to the PEPC website or to the park.



While responses were received from 24 states and more than 350 counties across the United States, Washington State and adjacent population centers like Portland, Oregon, accounted for most of the submissions. The areas identified in the map below included more than 950 comments or more than 90 percent of the total number received.



In addition to general public comments, the National Park Service received letters from official representatives of the following agencies and organizations:

- The Mountaineers
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Nisqually River Council
- Nisqually Tribe
- North Cascades Conservation Council
- City of Orting
- Washington Trails Association
- Winter Wildlands Alliance

Definition of Terms

Correspondence. A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter. It can be in the form of a letter, written comment form, online form (at PEPC), or email.

Comment. A comment is a portion of the text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject or issue. It could include such information as an expression of support or opposition to the use of a potential management tool, additional data regarding the existing condition, or an opinion debating the adequacy of an analysis. The correspondence identification number is provided at the end of quotes in brackets.

Comment Summary. A grouping that is centered on a common subject. Comment summaries combine similar comments. Representative quotes from the comments may be presented to create a comment summary.

Comment Summaries

Prompting Questions and Comment Summary Structure

Five questions were posed to commenters to receive targeted feedback on issues and opportunities in the corridor. These questions included:

1. What experiences in the Nisqually Corridor do you find most important?
 - a. How are these experiences unique from other experiences you have in the rest of the park and/or in Washington State?
 - b. What kind of experiences do you want future visitors/generations to have when they come to Paradise, Longmire, and other destinations along the Nisqually Corridor?
2. What issues most interfere with your desired park experience within the Nisqually to Paradise Corridor?
3. What strategies would you like the planning team to consider when brainstorming transportation and visitor experience solutions for the Nisqually Corridor?
4. What is the park doing well to manage these issues that you would like to see continue?
5. Are there other thoughts you'd like to share with the project team?

Within the comment summary that follows, major concepts and unique perspectives are represented for each of the questions that were posed to the participants. The responses to each of the five questions were then categorized based on similarity and summarized in the document.

Topic Question 1: What experiences in the Nisqually Corridor do you find most important?

Solitude

The ability to experience solitude is referenced as an important experience between the Nisqually Entrance (Ashford) and Paradise by many. Commenters value being able to connect with nature in a variety of unique ecosystems by accessing year-round, solo recreational opportunities such as hiking and camping and winter experiences such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Several commenters tied the themes of solitude and nature connection together, describing the importance of accessing peacefulness and a place to feel in awe of natural wonders.

Specific experiences in this area that commenters wish to preserve for future generations include access to the “quiet, slow, and densely wooded nature of the corridor between Ashford and Paradise” and the experience of hiking or camping with room for solitude and space for relaxation. Commenters observed increased development and its role in decreasing accessibility to peace and quiet via the Nisqually Corridor in recent years. The experience of a natural soundscape is important to many commenters. Visitors value “opportunities to listen to the sounds of nature” without human disruption.

Access to Recreation

Physical accessibility is an important part of recreation to commenters. Well-marked parking and restrooms were noted as important resources. Easily accessible and universal access hiking trails in both popular and more secluded areas are noted as critical to individuals with limited mobility—from senior citizens to small children. Accessibility also includes socioeconomic opportunity. The Nisqually entrance is described as critical for providing access to the park for visitors from disadvantaged communities in South Puget Sound.

Ensuring safe access for cyclists to the park during periods of high use is important to commenters. Improving safety for cyclists is recommended as a priority for the planning group.

Access to hiking is very important. Specific trails of value include the West Side Road, Paradise, Skyline Trail, Mazama Ridge Trail, Reflection Lakes, and the Nisqually Vista Loop Trail. Access to waterfalls like Comet, Christine, Narada, and Carter Falls is also very important. Several visitors said that prohibiting dogs from the park is a benefit to their park experience.

Overnight use is another important recreational opportunity. Several commented on the value of having parking access at all hours of the day to experience sunrises and sunsets (like Westside Road or Kautz) whether they stay the night or not. Many commenters referenced camping and backpacking as critical experiences they wish to preserve for future generations.

Winter recreation is described as the most important experience in the park for many. Several commenters praised current winter access in the Paradise area for snowshoeing, backcountry skiing, and winter hiking.

Year-round private vehicle access is important for some recreationists. Longer day and multiday trips such as climbing, ice climbing, skiing, summiting, etc. would be hindered if recreationalists needed to rely on public transportation or haul all their gear onto a bus to explore. One commenter also expressed a safety concern: without private transportation, ski recreationists might have to reduce the amount of cold weather safety gear they have available. Allowing road access to spontaneous, independent experiences in nature is noted as a crucial consideration for future planning.

Interpretation

Commenters listed nighttime sky programs, historical areas, and interpretive resources as important and mind-opening experiences. Commenters would be interested in more materials about how Tahoma fits into the spirituality of local indigenous tribes and how they used the surrounding lands and increased use of apps and internet downloads for interpretive use.

Views

Year-round accessible panoramic vistas are important experiences along the corridor for visitors—particularly for the classic “National Park Scenic Drive” experience that allows the opportunity to drive slowly, take in the sights, and stop at scenic pullouts. The views on the drive up to the visitor center are prized—including specific viewpoints like Narada Falls, Christine Falls, Ricksecker Point, and the many shorter trails near Paradise. Several commenters

mentioned the value of viewpoints along the Nisqually to Paradise Road Corridor for the elderly and mobile-impaired, as spectacular views can be viewed without having to hike or walk far. One commenter mentioned the importance of keeping these roads and viewpoints open year-round. The viewpoints are noted as excellent locations for photography.

Commenters referenced the importance of private transportation for the viewpoint experience. One objected a bus route, saying the “individual American experience would not be as impactful if something like a Bus Route were offered. Most of the magic of this park is adjusting the pace of your trip based on what you discover along the way.”

Natural Resources, Including Wilderness Character and Alpine Meadows

Alpine meadows are greatly valued in the Nisqually Corridor for many visitors. Many visitors described years of positive visits in these “unique” and “majestic” areas. Wildflowers are a particularly valuable sensory experience that many commenters wished to be preserved for future generations. Several commenters praised the current accessibility to alpine meadows, with easy/intermediate hikes to pristine areas. Protecting wildlife and wilderness character is of top concern to many. Opportunities to see wild animals, including fox, ptarmigan, marmot, and pika, are valued experiences. Maintaining an untrammelled quality to alpine meadows is an important planning consideration to ensure that the grandeur and ecological magnificence of the area is preserved for future visitors.

Culturally Significant Assets

Many commenters value culturally significant assets—including the Longmire Historic District’s historic buildings, Paradise Inn, and architecture throughout the corridor. The Trail of Shadows is important for commenters, with one commenter mentioning they have returned to the area annually since the 1960s. “Parkitecture” is also worth noting, as a commenter cited the gate and Mount Rainier sign as a welcoming and exciting feature of the park. Culturally significant assets go beyond buildings—viewsapes and natural features are also valued by visitors and should be protected for future generations. Visitors also value the cultural significance of the area for indigenous people and value opportunities to learn about historic uses of the land.

Topic Question 2: What issues most interfere with your desired park experience within the Nisqually to Paradise Corridor?

Crowded Visitor Experiences at Trails and Viewpoints

Many commenters expressed overcrowding as a main issue interfering with their park experience. Commenters expressed that crowding is the worst during summer weekends when skies are clear, with crowding issues typically peaking in the afternoon. Commenters noted crowding to be most problematic on trails (especially at Paradise) and at facilities and viewpoints along the corridor. These crowded experiences generally add frustration to commenters’ experience, as it becomes more challenging to find quiet space and enjoy nature as they intended. Commenters’ frustration with crowdedness is connected to experiences of

visitors not following park policies, large unruly groups, littering, tour buses, and poor trail etiquette. Commenters express that the damage from crowding reduces the quality of the attraction and takes away the joy of going to the park. Crowding takes away from visitors' ability to enjoy the history and beauty of the area. A few commenters noted their own history and family history with the park and are upset their experiences as children will not be the same as the experiences their grandchildren will have at the park because of crowding over time.

Some commenters expressed no desire to visit when the park is this crowded and either avoid these more crowded areas entirely or travel to these areas in off-times to lessen the chance of crowded experiences. Some commenters actively avoid visiting the park from June to August, arrive at the park very early in the morning, and only visit these areas in the shoulder seasons to avoid crowds. Commenters acknowledge that crowding observed in summer 2020 may be higher than normal because of COVID-19. Many commenters expressed gratitude for being able to recreate outdoors during COVID-19 as a way to escape city life and recreate outdoors in a safer environment. While crowding may be impacted by COVID-19, other commenters acknowledged that crowding issues in this area have been problematic for the last few years.

Commenters recommended reducing the camping group limit from 12 to a smaller number to ensure effective passing on the trails. Commenters also recommended more strategic separation of user groups (shorter, paved frontcountry trails and longer, more challenging backcountry trails) and a desire for priority access to the park and Paradise trails for in-state residents over out-of-state visitors.

Entrance Station Queues

Similar to crowded visitor experiences, entrance station queues are experienced by commenters during times of peak visitation (summer weekends with clear weather during mid to late afternoon). During times of peak visitation, commenters shared experiences of waiting more than two hours to enter the park with a line of vehicles over two miles prior to entering the park. Commenters expressed frustration for having to wait for such long periods with no access to restrooms and then end up entering the park in a bad mood. Commenters see the use of highway 706 and businesses along this highway being used for public restrooms as problematic. Commenters find it problematic that highway 706 is owned by the state and yet is used as a parking lot for overflow traffic into the park. The unpredictable nature of the entrance station queue frustrates many commenters, resulting in some entering the park through alternate entrances or hiking outside of the park entirely. Volunteers at the park also expressed frustration at having to wait in long lines before their sessions begin. Commenters connect entrance station queue issues with insufficient booth capacity, slow transaction times with park staff, lack of a fast track lane for pass holders, too narrow of a road, and visitors using entrance station time for obtaining park orientation materials instead of capitalizing this information at visitor centers. Commenters think that communication must be improved between the entrance station and parking lots, and some would prefer to not be let into the park at the entrance station if there is no parking available within the park. Commenters who experience ease getting into the park via the Nisqually Entrance said that they enter during weekdays and/or early morning hours.

Impacts to Alpine Meadows

Impacts to alpine meadows observed by commenters occur mostly at Paradise and include the following: littering, dog waste, picking flowers, sitting in wildflower meadows, stepping off-trail for photo opportunities, stepping off-trail to allow others to pass, and “meadow stomping.” Connected to the issue of crowded experience, commenters shared that photographers step off-trail and set up tripods to take photographs to ensure that other visitors are not in view for their photograph. While pavement at Paradise helps limit erosion, it also provides access to more fragile areas, and visitors may not understand the fragility of this resource. Commenters expressed frustration that other visitors ignore the “stay on trail” signs and walk on meadow areas that are roped off from visitor use. Watching others step off-trail upsets some commenters to the degree of stepping into an informal educational/enforcement role on behalf of the park to educate visitors that they must stay on the trail to preserve the sensitive resource. Many commenters attribute the impacts to alpine meadows to high crowding on trails, low staffing to enforce trail regulations, and poor education about trail etiquette in this fragile ecosystem. Commenters would like to see more ropes and educational signs to deter visitors from causing more impacts to alpine meadows.

Impacts to Other Resources

Impacts to other resources observed by commenters include the following: littering, presence of dogs on trails, parking in undesignated areas, creation of social shortcut/switchback trails, drone use, playing music from radio/cellphone/speakers, poor interactions with wildlife, and poaching plants and animals for medicinal purposes. The most common litter observed by commenters in the corridor is toilet paper, which connects to a perceived shortage of restroom facilities to accommodate demand and lack of education of Leave No Trace principles. Concerns with dogs relate to their scent being added to the natural environment, waste not being picked up, stomping on alpine meadows, and scaring wildlife away. Commenters noted that parking in undesignated areas can impact roadside flowers, cause more roadway congestion, limits viewscape experiences, and creates safety concerns regarding visibility limitations. Drone use and the presence of music is noted by commenters as taking away from their experiences of wilderness and natural environment. Commenters described poor interactions with wildlife, including visitors approaching wildlife, feeding wildlife, harassing wildlife, and taking photographs of wildlife closer than a safe distance away. Commenters attribute these resource impacts to crowding of visitors with poor trail etiquette.

Lack of Facilities and Services

Many commenters noted a lack of facilities to accommodate current use patterns, specifically with regard to bathrooms, road infrastructure, and various facilities. Commenters shared experiences of waiting more than 30 minutes to use a composting toilet, noting that restrooms are often in disrepair or unusable at Narada Falls, the visitor center, and at Cougar Rock. Commenters would like to have access to restrooms just prior to or upon entry to the park. Commenters noted that tour buses dropping large numbers of visitors off at one time and early closing of restrooms compound the issue of bathroom shortages. Commenters connected the lack of restrooms with the waste and toilet paper seen on trails.

Regarding road infrastructure, commenters noted limited parking opportunities at the Narada Falls and Comet Falls parking areas. Commenters connected limited parking opportunities with safety concerns of people walking on the road and would like to see more crosswalks for pedestrians. Commenters also noted limited/nonexistent infrastructure and road maintenance to support road cycling. A few commenters also noted a lack of charging infrastructure for electric cars.

Overall, commenters noted facilities as run down and overused. Commenters expressed that the long-failing septic system at Longmire must be fixed, and that the park is slow to clean up fallen trees when reported. Commenters also noted too few trash receptacles in areas with high visitor use. Commenters see the lack of showers and hot water at campgrounds as an issue. Commenters would like more picnic facilities and rain shelters overlooking the river at Reflection Lakes, Paradise, and throughout the corridor. While some commenters view dogs in the park as an issue, others would like to see more facilities and programming to support them, including a concessionaire who provides kennels and a dog park. While some commenters appreciate cell service for coordinating with others and trip planning/safety, others wish there was no service within the park, as it takes away from their wilderness experience. Lastly, many commenters acknowledged a lack of hospitality and food services from Eatonville to inside the park boundary. Commenters want more opportunities for sit-down experiences outside of convenience stores and want healthier options that are locally sourced. Commenters would also like to see stores with local art, souvenirs, and more park-branded items in the gift shop.

Lack of Overnight Opportunities

Commenters expressed difficulty in obtaining appropriate year-round overnight opportunities to meet their needs. The lack of overnight opportunities has forced some visitors to do day trips instead of overnight experiences as planned and preferred. Commenters noted lack of overnight opportunities resulting in visitors camping along the road and in parking areas out of desperation. Commenters think that more lodging options may help reduce daytime road traffic. In addition to increased developed campgrounds, commenters would also like to see developed horse campgrounds.

For those who wish to stay overnight with full amenities, commenters find it difficult to get a room at Paradise Inn during their desired time. Reservations must be made well in advance, while weather opportunities cannot be planned. Commenters generally want to stay overnight on weekends, when the weather is good, during peak flower season.

For those who wish to stay overnight at a campground, commenters find it difficult to reserve and access a campsite. Commenters find that needing to book months in advance is a barrier, especially with their inconsistent work schedules. Commenters would like to see more campsites available first come, first served; more backcountry camping opportunities; and better communication between the reservation vendors and public about campsite availability. Commenters expressed that while the website shows campgrounds as full, they do not reflect the availability on the ground. Commenters would like to see more campground maintenance to reduce the number of campsites closed due to hazard trees. For those who successfully obtain a campsite, commenters shared that other visitors often hover and inquire about when they are leaving in hopes of taking over their campsite. While the population interested in camping has

increased, commenters are frustrated that opportunities for camping have decreased. For example, the closures of Sunshine Point, Paradise, and Longmire campgrounds with no replacement frustrates commenters. Commenters would like the camping area across the river in Longmire to be opened up for tent camping.

Parking Lot Congestion

Parking lot congestion is a seasonal issue and is worse on summer weekends with clear weather during mid to late afternoon. Parking lot congestion causes commenters to experience high levels of stress while looking for parking. Commenters find it frustrating to enter the park without a guarantee of being able to find parking at their desired destination along the corridor. Commenters have also experienced traffic jams in parking lots while drivers look for parking spaces and circle the lots, which can take up to an hour and contributes to roadway congestion. Some commenters circled the lot without luck and eventually went home disappointed. While some commenters find parking more easily during weekdays, others experience a full parking lot by 7:30 a.m. on weekends. Commenters find that going to the park very early is the only way to increase chances of finding a parking space at their desired location. Parking is noted as particularly limited at the Christine Falls, Narada Falls, Comet Falls, Longmire, Paradise, and other trailheads and attractions along the road.

When lots are full, visitors often park on the roadway, creating safety concerns for pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists. Parking lots are not only full of cars but also full of many pedestrians walking to their destinations. Commenters who find parking give up on other recreational opportunities out of fear of not being able to find a different parking spot. Sometimes cars are blocked in by other cars that are illegally parked, preventing visitors from leaving the park. Commenters find it problematic that park staff do not monitor all parking lots, nor do they enforce parking regulations. Other commenters get frustrated by visitors asking questions to traffic attendees when staff are able to help regulate parking lot congestion. When overflow parking is used, commenters feel confused about where overflow parking is allowable. In terms of parking lot design, commenters note that parking lots do not accommodate the number of buses, motorcycles, or RV's traveling in the park. Commenters would also like to see more American with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking spaces, and better communication about ADA spaces being full prior to entering a lot. Some commenters recommend not letting more visitors into the park when the parking lots are full to reduce parking lot congestion.

Roadway Congestion and Safety

Roadway Congestion. Roadway congestion is a seasonal issue and is worse on summer weekends with clear weather during mid to late afternoon. Many commenters described roadway congestion as an issue because of the stress it brings drivers, the smell of exhaust, noise pollution, and light pollution from cars. Inside of the park, commenters expressed frustration with the narrow width of the road, drivers traveling too slow/fast, and visitors stopping in the middle of the road for photograph and/or wildlife opportunities. The narrow width of the road creates concerns for RV use, and these concerns are amplified when vehicles and cyclists attempt to share the road. Bicyclists often cause backups on the road as there is not ample room for drivers to safely pass bicyclists. Commenters suggest adding a bike lane to reduce vehicular

congestion and increase safety on road. Commenters get frustrated by drivers traveling too slow on the roads, causing others behind to slow down and creating congestion especially on windy sections of road. Commenters note that drivers stop suddenly and pull off the road without using signals, creating unsafe conditions on the road. Other commenters get frustrated by drivers traveling too fast on the roads, making the park feel more like a highway than the wilderness and increasing risk for vehicle/pedestrian/bicyclist/wildlife conflicts. Commenters would like to see more vistas and pullouts at areas with views to give visitors the chance to take photos in an area safer than the current situation of visitors stopping in the middle of the road. Roadway congestion is so bad that many commenters are visiting less during the summer and on weekends to avoid this issue. Roadway congestion is noted as particularly high at Tahoma Creek, Christine Falls, Narada Falls, Longmire, and Glacier Bridge. Outside of the park, roadway congestion is noted by commenters on Highway 706. Commenters find it to be unsafe that local residents of Ashford cannot get to their homes on summer weekends because the line of cars to get into the park.

Roadway Safety. Safety issues observed by commenters include the following: drivers exceeding the speed limit, aggressive driving, cars being broken into, poor emergency response options, warming facilities being closed during winter threatening the elderly, pedestrian/vehicular conflicts, bicycle/vehicular conflicts, inability to social distance on crowded trails, and poor hazard response related to earthquake, lahar, and human violence. Drivers exceeding the speed limit is of concern to commenters because of the windy and steep nature of the roads and the distracting views, which increase the chance of hitting a pedestrian or wildlife. Emergency services concerns include visitors' inability to trust they could leave the park in a timely manner, if needed, and the inability for emergency vehicles to travel quickly within and outside of the park to reach residents in the 2- to 3-mile stretch of Highway 706 between Copper Creek and the Nisqually Entrance. Commenters connect pedestrian/vehicular conflicts with roadside parking, as visitors often park in blind spots near trailheads and pedestrians are often forced to walk along roads not intended for pedestrian use. Commenters suggest using barriers to prevent pedestrian/vehicular conflicts related to roadside parking. Some commenters suggested that the use of shuttles would help reduce bicycle/vehicular conflicts by reducing vehicular roadway congestion and increasing road visibility.

Staff Shortages

Many commenters noted that staff shortages interfere with their park experience. Commenters noted low presence of rangers on the trails and on roads throughout the corridor. Even when rangers are seen on the trail, commenters feel they are too busy and overworked to adequately educate visitors on proper trail etiquette and enforce park regulations. Commenters are somewhat understanding of the park's inability to open with a wide range of hours during the winter. Because of low presence of rangers on trails, multiple commenters attempt to fill this role to educate other visitors, and their intentions are not always received well by other visitors. Commenters would like to see more staff presence at the park to ticket those who do not abide by park regulations, and some are willing to pay higher entrance fees to support more ranger staffing. Commenters would like to see rangers stationed at the busiest trailheads to help protect park resources, enforce park regulations, and educate visitors on park regulations. Commenters believe that rangers need a higher wage to be more competitive with other jobs and to encourage

applications from high-quality candidates. Other commenters note that ranger staffing numbers should increase proportionally as visitation to the park increases.

Topic Question 3: What strategies would you like the planning team to consider when brainstorming transportation and visitor experience solutions for the Nisqually Corridor?

Shuttles

One of the most frequently suggested strategies to alleviate traffic congestion and improve visitor experience in the corridor was use of a shuttle system. There were various ideas for the shuttle system, including where the shuttle should originate, how many should operate within the corridor, user group proposals, timing and frequency, and fees. Therefore, information for each of these topic areas is presented separately below.

Commenters stated that the general benefits of the shuttle system included providing an option for visitors to enter the park without worrying about parking lot capacity, the flexibility to do various hikes that start and end at different locations, decreased vehicle congestion in the park, improved air quality, reduced noise pollution, reduced vehicle-wildlife collisions, and the prevention of natural resource damage caused by roadside parking. Many respondents expressed interest in the shuttle service providing interpretation of Mount Rainier National Park either through an automated system or from a park ranger that boards the shuttle. There was general support for a green shuttle system, one that is carbon neutral and relies on renewable electricity. Many commenters mentioned other National Park Service systems that operate shuttles such as Rocky Mountain, Yosemite, Denali, Zion, Bandelier, and Glacier National Parks. Some respondents suggested combining the shuttle with a reservation or timed-entry system to ensure visitor crowding does not continue.

Nisqually Corridor Shuttle. Commenters recommended implementing an alternative transportation system that was high capacity and high frequency. This system could pick up visitors from destinations outside of the park, such as from parking lots in Ashford or Elbe, and transport them throughout the corridor. Partnering with the town of Ashford to develop a parking lot for a park-and-ride option was a frequently proposed option for a shuttle system. Respondents also suggested using Tahoma Woods as an area to operate the shuttle and have visitors park and board the transit system. Specifically, some commenters mentioned using a land parcel across from T-woods for the parking area and shuttle pick-up and drop-off point. Another proposed location for a lot just outside of the park was an area across from Whittaker's Hotel.

There were various suggested options for stops within the park including, Westside Road, Kautz Creek, Twin Firs, Longmire, Cougar Rock picnic area, Carter Falls, Comet and Christine Falls, Ricksecker Point, Narada Falls, and Paradise. There were suggestions to operate a shuttle that runs on an interior loop around Paradise and one that takes visitors to exterior lots. Between Paradise and the Stevens Canyon entrance, visitors suggested stops at popular hiking destinations such as Snow and Bench Lakes, Reflection Lake, and Pinnacle Peak. Many

suggested a hybrid approach, in which a free shuttle runs the entire corridor from Ashford to Ohanapecosh Campground with frequent stops at trailheads in conjunction with a fee-based express shuttle that has limited stops for visitors who want to go directly to Paradise.

Paradise “Campus” Shuttle. In addition to the idea of a shuttle system within the corridor, some respondents proposed a shuttle system that circumnavigated the Paradise area. For instance, the shuttle could circulate from Paradise, down the Lower Valley Road, returning to the lower and upper lot via the Picnic Area. Some commenters suggested closing this entire loop to private vehicles and allowing only bicycling (including e-bikes) and foot traffic.

Parkwide Shuttle. In addition, respondents suggested providing a shuttle service on Westside Road on the far side of Dry Creek to Round Pass and a shuttle system that runs from Ashford to Crystal Mountain during the peak summer season. Commenters proposed a similar approach with the Sunrise area by developing a parking lot near Hwy 410, operating a shuttle system, and providing stops at Summerland, White River, the viewpoints along Sunrise road, and the Sunrise visitor center. This would help with consistent traffic problems getting into park, finding (an always impossible) parking spot at popular trailheads, and people could build some creative trail/hiking routes with a shuttle service.

State-wide Transportation. There was also expressed interest in a shuttle system that spans the greater Washington State and allows people without personal transportation to visit the park from major locations such as Seattle, Tacoma, Eatonville, Yelm, Pullayap, Enumclaw, Spanaway, Orting, and Seatac Airport (similar to King County Metro’s trailhead bus service). For these locations farther from the park, commenters suggested partnering with a private bus service. In conjunction, commenters suggested a transient shuttle stop near the Nisqually Entrance that allowed people to transfer buses and enter the park; however, some respondents suggest this may be a less convenient option. Commenters mentioned a transportation hub near the park that allows travelers from the north and south to congregate and access the park rather than use one of the major transportation hubs such as Seattle.

Timing and Frequency. In terms of timing and frequency, commenters suggested various solutions such as making the shuttles available 24 hours per day but requiring visitors to use them when parking at Paradise is full. There were some comments that supported a shuttle system but did not feel it should be the only option for accessing the park. If the shuttle does not run frequently enough or fails to provide similar access as a personal vehicle, it will likely not be used and could add to the congestion along the corridor. Frequency times for the shuttle system include recommendations of every 15 to 30 minutes, particularly during peak visitation times. Commenters suggested that the shuttle service should run during the months of July, August, and early September on the weekends. In contrast, some respondents proposed a shuttle system that runs year-round, and others proposed a system that eliminates the use of cars from the road corridor.

Fees. Respondents suggested free shuttle services throughout the park. Other commenters suggested providing an incentive to visitors who use the shuttle system; proposed incentives included discounted entrance fees, an expanded entrance area for a shuttle-only park entrance

that can bypass the primary entrance lane and offering maps, and educational information on the shuttle. Commenters encouraged the planning team to explore the potential for the shuttle system to pay for itself or be heavily subsidized. Some respondents proposed a voluntary free bus with the potential to expand to a mandatory shuttle system following evaluation of the system's success. A few commenters expressed support for paying to use a shuttle system that transported them through the parks.

User Groups. There was a diverse range of opinions regarding who the shuttle system should accommodate. For instance, some commenters suggested it should be a voluntary option for visitors who only want to see the park from a vehicle and stop at main viewpoints and/or visitor centers. There was general support for an optional shuttle to relieve some tourist traffic but that people would like to have the option to drive the corridor as visitors have done for decades. Commenters proposed that the shuttle system should serve visitors who are camping or staying in overnight lodging so spaces can be left at high-use lots for shorter-term day visitors. Others commented that day trip users, visitors who are going to trails, overlooks, and key areas of destinations should be the primary users of a shuttle system since they have less to carry and therefore less need for a personal vehicle. Still other commenters suggested that overnight visitors (backcountry and/or climbing permits, campground permits, lodging), visitors with disabilities, and employees and volunteers should be allowed to use personal vehicles so that they can park at trailheads and at their destinations. Once in the park with their personal vehicle, all visitors should use the shuttle system. Other commenters suggested that some users, such as skiers and climbers that carry a lot of gear, should not be required to use the shuttle system. Proposals for the shuttle systems also included different buses for visitors going to lodges and museums versus those interesting in hiking. In contrast, there were suggestions to provide a shuttle system for locals only, and that if the park implements such a shuttle, locals should have a discount.

Opposition: A few commenters expressed opposition to the idea of shuttle buses in Mount Rainier. Of those commenters, many were worried about being able to access the park during non-peak hours (such as 3-6 a.m.) to climb or photograph the mountain during sunrise.

Timed-Entry/Reservations

Some commenters expressed that it may be time for Mount Rainier to consider a reservation system to protect the resources and provide for a high-quality visitor experience. Many respondents suggested that access to Paradise needs to be metered but that this strategy may only be necessary for weekends in July and August with the potential to expand it to May through September. Suggestions included limiting the number of people that may enter the park through one or more entrances by establishing a reservation system or a first come, first served managed access system. A number of variations on this proposed managed access system were suggested, including:

- A permit required for entry from 7 a.m. to sunset during summer weekends and holidays.
- Advanced reservations should be required and enforced particularly for busy weekends in the summer months.

- Timed entry slots by same day or advanced sign up for people traveling from out-of-state to visit the park; visitors seeking to enter during peak hours should be charged more to incentivize visiting at the park during non-peak hours.
- Requiring visitors to sign up in advance for parking spots for a certain duration of time to ensure visitors have a spot.
- Offering lotteries for campsites at certain entrance stations; for example, Cougar Rock at Nisqually and Ohanapecosh at Stevens Canyon entrance.
- Day use visitors should be required to reserve their time slot for entry during peak hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.).
- Implementing a reservation system that allows visitors to reserve a day use permit one month in advance.
- When obtaining their reservation, visitors should be required to complete a Leave No Trace ethics quiz before being allowed into the park.
- For visitors who do have a reservation, they should be able to bypass the entrance lane.

Commenters suggested a no refund policy should be implemented for cancellations and no-shows to help generate fee revenue for Mount Rainier. Similarly, the reservation system could be paired with a shuttle system that allows visitors to purchase a seat for the shuttle. Another proposal included restricting entrance hours on weekends to certain time slots such as 7–9 a.m., 1–5 p.m., and 6–8 p.m.

Commenters suggested that people with overnight accommodations in the park should already be guaranteed a reservation into the park or a parking space. Respondents suggested other systems as examples such as Acadia, Rocky Mountain (Summer 2020 system), Yosemite, and Zion national parks. Many cited they do not want the park turning into a “Wild Disneyland” and that use should be actively managed by implementing a reservation system during peak times.

Some proposals suggested restructuring the entrance fees into a tiered system that incentivizes visitors to arrive at various times. Some suggested a discount should be offered to visitors that live in Washington. Some respondents, particularly those who identify as locals, expressed frustration in not having access to the park and being forced to wait in traffic. Furthermore, there was expressed opposition towards implementing a reservation system and that there are better ways to reduce crowds in the park by providing opportunities for visitors to avoid them. Some expressed concern about reservations to visit certain sites along the corridor; for instance, visitors should not have to obtain two reservations to visit Narada Falls and Paradise. Additionally, a reservation system may take away from the spontaneity of visiting the park when the weather is nice; a certain number of entries into the park should be saved for first-come, first-served visitors.

Establish a Visitor Capacity

Commenters suggested that a capacity on the number of visitors per day is needed parkwide. Many respondents suggested limiting the total number of vehicles allowed in the park per day, pairing this management strategy with a shuttle system, timed-entry, lottery, or reservation system. Most suggested limiting the number of people primarily during the peak summer

season. In addition, some language from the general management plan was cited that the planning team would identify a carrying capacity, and respondents expressed frustration that this has not yet been completed.

Commenters articulated that the park roads and facilities were not designed to accommodate the current visitation that Mount Rainier receives; therefore, a visitor capacity would help protect resources, particularly the subalpine meadows. Commenters also suggested that capacity would provide for a better visitor experience and increase customer service. If the park is unable to establish a capacity parkwide, then limiting the number of people at Paradise at one time could be beneficial. Park rangers could be stationed near Narada Falls and divert visitors to other locations of the park once capacity at Paradise is reached. If space is limited, visitors should respect the park capacity and that exceeding this number leads to damaged park resources and creates an undesirable visitor experience. Commenters stated that implementing a capacity allows for preservation of resources so that future generations can enjoy the park. Capacity could be identified by trailhead numbers, requiring a permit for cars to park at each location.

There was both expressed interest and opposition towards limiting the number of people that can enter the park on any given day. For those who supported the idea, there were suggestions to limit by parking spots or other ways to identify the capacity. Related to a visitor capacity for Paradise itself, some commenters expressed that although the parking lots were full, the trails and facilities didn't feel overcrowded. Respondents acknowledged they would be willing to recreate at other locations in Washington if there was a capacity at Mount Rainier that ensured resource protection and improved visitor experiences. For those that expressed opposition, respondents did not support restricting access to the park, particularly for local, in-state residents who enjoy the spontaneity of traveling to Mount Rainier when the mountain is out. Additionally, there was a general concern that limiting access would lead to fewer people caring about the park.

Strategies for Managing to a Visitor Capacity. One suggestion included monitoring parking capacity using cameras and computerized surveillance systems that could frequently update a web page that allowed visitors to plan their trip itinerary accordingly. Real-time communication between rangers at locations throughout the park could inform rangers working the entrance station of parking lots that have available parking spaces. The park should stop allowing vehicles to enter when the trailheads, overlooks, and parking lots are at full capacity. Consider reducing the number of people that can hike on the trails and increasing the guided tours to ensure that visitor experience and education is high quality.

Implement a Capacity to Protect Resources

In addition to the comments above, other comments focused on the need for the park to limit visitation and infrastructure to maintain and protect the park's natural and cultural resources for future generations. The increase in park visitation is causing too much trash, gas emissions, damage to subalpine meadows, and noise impacts to soundscapes and the opportunity for solitude.

Many suggested that adding roads or other infrastructure would not only bring in more visitors and increase crowding but also continue to fragment the park's ecosystems. The focus of this plan should be away from adding more infrastructure and instead on accommodating more foot and cyclist traffic. Some respondents suggested a shuttle system or a reservation/time entry system to limit the amount of visitors that can enter the park each day and reduce the need for more infrastructure.

A few comments suggested limiting the type of recreation allowed in the park to keep with conservation values, such as eliminating the snow play area in the winter.

Education and Enforcement

There were suggestions to increase general education efforts on topics such as the importance of conservation, the fragile state of the environment, and trail etiquette. Additional signage was proposed in high traffic areas to communicate sustainable, responsible, and safe recreation. There was a suggestion to include international icons for non-English speaking visitors for regulations such as no dogs allowed, no picking flowers, no off-trail travel, and keeping a safe distance from wildlife. Similarly, commenters suggested additional kiosks with information such as maps and FAQs in strategic locations in the corridor. Commenters discussed the need for real-time information displayed on variable message signs on the highways leading to the park from Seattle/Tacoma and SeaTac in addition to more proximate signs on highway 706 in Elbe or Ashford.

In general, visitors suggested more information provided online regarding the current conditions in the park. Webcams were specifically suggested so that visitors could observe traffic on the road leading to the Nisqually Entrance as well as parking lots in the corridor. Other comments noted the need for more multimedia and social media education efforts around Leave No Trace. One commenter suggested including annual social media posts on the amount of garbage picked up in the past year and a challenge to the public to decrease the trash left behind.

Commenters emphasized the importance of increased staff presence, ranging from volunteers to rangers to law enforcement. Concerns were around dogs on trails, drones, food storage, litter, inappropriate parking, and off-trail use. When staff presence is not possible or effective, commenters suggested issuing tickets and fines to deter inappropriate behaviors.

Visitor Dispersal

Many commenters noted it would be beneficial to increase and improve messaging, which encourages visiting during off-peak times and less popular locations. Some specific messages could include using one of the other entrance stations (Stevens Canyon, Carbon River, or White River) and during peak times visitors approaching the Nisqually Entrance could be diverted to Skate Creek Road. Encouraging weekday visitation for those with flexible schedules such as out-of-state or out-of-country visitors could help too. Messaging could also include nearby recreational opportunities outside the park such as Crystal Mountain Resort and United States Forest Service Snoquera Falls and Clearwater Wilderness areas.

Others proposed creating or restoring access to areas of park such as Westside Road and Carbon River so that visitors have other options. One commenter noted that new experiences would be available if Westside Road was opened without further developing new areas and could be marketed as major “new” attractions.

Several commenters suggested closing the road to Paradise when it is full and directing traffic to continue along Steven’s Canyon Road. An electronic sign could be posted near this intersection with current conditions and alternate opportunities such as the Reflection Lake area, Stevens Canyon, Box Canyon, Grove of the Patriarchs, Tipsoo Lake / Chinook Pass hikes, and the Sunrise Area visitor centers and hikes.

Entrance Station Improvements

Improvements to the entrance station range from messaging to revised operations to structural changes. Comments suggested encouraging visitors to buy passes online ahead of time, surge pricing on weekends and holidays, deferring visitor questions to a later park information center, opening the gate when roadway congestion is high, and more staff working at the entrance.

Many noted the importance of a lane designated for those with camping reservations, lodge reservations, and those who are annual pass holders. This lane could be an automatic gate with scanning technology. Other alternatives included the option to pay in Ashford, adding a lane on highway 706 designated for pass holders (similar to the WA State Ferries), adding an additional park entrance on the west side of the park or moving the entrance to Kautz Creek to reduce local impacts, and also providing a restroom at the entrance. There was a suggestion to reconfigure the entrance station area by removing the booths and replacing them with additional traffic lanes and kiosks for pass purchase.

An alternative strategy suggestion was to switch to payment upon park exit. A commenter noted the benefits of this process, including increased revenue with fees collected 24 hours a day, staffing flexibility if automated payment systems are employed, reduced congestion at the entrance during peak times, and reduced emissions from idling cars in entrance station lines.

Facility Improvements and Expansion

Improvements to existing facilities and expansion or new development of facilities such as roads, parking lots, trails, campgrounds, and restrooms were frequently mentioned in correspondences. Roadway improvements included additional or expanded pullouts for sightseeing and to allow for passing traffic, traffic calming solutions along the road, additional signage along the road with current condition information for popular destinations, as well as roadway improvements for pedestrian and cyclist safety. Several comments proposed a separate bike and pedestrian path that parallels the road from Nisqually to Paradise. Many were in favor of restoring access to Westside Road and improving Carbon River Road and the road to Mowich Lake. Additional suggested improvements to the roadway included barricades and barriers on road shoulders to prevent unauthorized parking, electric car charging stations, and accessibility improvements to viewpoint areas.

Expansion of the trailhead parking lots and the Paradise lot were common suggestions. This included trailhead overflow lots with connector trails so that visitors were not walking along the road. Many commenters suggested a large parking lot outside of the park from which some or all visitors could ride a shuttle into the park. There were a few suggestions to consider building a gondola from an outside lot to Paradise. These comments discussed the benefit of less road maintenance/snowplowing, reduction in noise, improved visitor experience, and more room at Paradise for other uses. There was also a suggestion to build a helicopter pad at Paradise for search and rescue activities and project aviation.

Many comments emphasized the need for additional camping opportunities in the corridor, including Longmire, and the expansion of Cougar Rock. Both frontcountry and backcountry camping opportunities are desired. Additional restroom facilities were discussed at locations such as the Nisqually Entrance, Reflection Lakes, and privies along trails. There was also a desire for additional trails, including accessible trails. To discourage off-trail travel and protect resources, commenters suggested signage along trails. Finally, improved cell service throughout the corridor was requested.

Topic Question 4: What is the park doing well to manage these issues that you would like to see continue?

Communication

Many commenters appreciated the updates on the park website and social media and wish to see this continue. The live updates via Twitter about park conditions, including road closures, entrance wait times, filled parking lots, and weather, were helpful in informing what visitors can expect when they visit the park. It was also noted that offering suggestions for less-crowded times and places to visit in the park and the webcams were valuable in trip planning.

Respondents also thought the information shared via the website was useful. Education materials on park regulations, leave no trace, accessibility information, and trail safety guidelines helped ensure resource protection and a great visitor experience.

Some comments appreciated the outreach for public comment on park planning efforts and enjoyed the ArcGIS visualization the park posted to communicate to the public about this planning effort.

Knowledgeable Park Staff

An overwhelming number of comments shared positive experiences with park staff. Many noted that the park rangers were very knowledgeable and friendly and did a great job educating visitors on safety, resource protection, and interpretive themes. Park staff also were essential in helping direct traffic and parking during busy days, and many comments stated they received fantastic customer service when interacting with park staff. It was encouraged for the park to continue to recruit wonderful employees.

In addition, comments frequently praised the Meadow Rovers. The park's recruitment of volunteers to help maintain trails and facilities was also appreciated, and commenters wanted to see the volunteer program continue.

Entrance Station – Pass Holder Entrances

Commenters that were waved through the entrance station because they had a pass or directed to a pass-only lane were satisfied and would like to see this continue. However, many comments stated that they were not aware of an annual pass holder only lane and encouraged the opening of one. Other solutions to help reduce congestion were to have a volunteer/employee or local/residence entrance to bypass visitor traffic. Additional comments voiced the need to continue to see both windows opened at the Nisqually Entrance Station to help the flow of traffic.

Maintenance – Improved Maintenance, Facilities, and Winter Snow Removal

Many comments thanked the park for the well-maintained facilities and the services offered throughout the Nisqually/Paradise Corridor. Items to note were clean and open bathrooms; well-maintained trails; road access/plowing in the winter; clean visitor centers; parking availability at Paradise, including at the overflow lot; road maintenance (resurfacing, etc.); signage; preserved historic structures; and paved trails for accessibility. Commenters would like to see trail design and maintenance consider a wider user group. For example, commenters want longer ADA trail opportunities, more child-friendly trails, steps that are smaller for shorter folks, less steep trails with more switchbacks, and more benches or logs for resting along the trail.

Compliments were also given to the well-managed resources in the park. It was noted the park does a great job in managing the forest and maintaining the wilderness experience by avoiding cutting too many trees, picking up trash, and roping off areas to reduce off-road parking and social trails. The increased cell phone reception was an added level of safety for some visitors, while it takes away opportunities to experience wilderness for others.

Permit System

Commenters thought the management of backcountry and permit system works well, including climbing permits. Most comments supported the backcountry permit system in place, with a few having had trouble obtaining permits for the Wonderland Trail or "walk-up/day of" permits. Because "walk up" permits can actually be picked up a day in advance, commenters noted that they are often gone by the time the "day of" arrives.

Topic Question 5: Are there other thoughts you'd like to share with the project team?

Equitable Access

Many comments emphasized the need for the park to consider equitable access in several ways, suggesting the park should look at ways to increase the diversity of visitors by engaging with and including all populations in park planning efforts. Some respondents suggested creating programs and partnerships to increase outreach, engagement, and opportunities for low-income and Black, Indigenous and People of Color families to access and enjoy public lands.

Cost and location were noted as hinderances for some visitors to visit the park. Many respondents suggested creating an entrance fee structure that provides some flexibility in price, such as reduced rates for carpooling or entering the park during less busy times. Other solutions from comments included creating a shuttle service from large metropolitan areas for visitors who do not have a vehicle. In these comments, it was suggested that the shuttle fare include the park entrance fee at a reduced or free rate to encourage shuttle use and a more equitable park entrance fee. Additionally, commenters noted a lack of camping opportunities and the need to book months in advance creates further barriers to access.

Some comments recommended having interpretive and outreach materials provided in multiple languages. Other comments would like more interpretive stories about indigenous people who call this area home, including changing the park name to Mt Tahoma or "Ti'Swaq" as proposed by some Puyallup and to continue to allow free access to tribal members.

Increasing facility offerings to accommodate different needs was another equitable access topic. Some suggestions included adding electricity at some campsites to meet health needs, improved accessibility on trails and visitor services, increased accessible parking, and providing large print and braille options for interpretive materials.

Winter Road Closures

Numerous commenters expressed that the winter gate hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. severely prohibit options for safe winter recreation in the park. Starting this late in the morning can be unsafe for backcountry skiers traveling through challenging terrain. Commenters would prefer for the park to open at 7 a.m. Similarly, experienced backcountry skiers/snowshoers/splitboarders find it challenging to successfully exit the park at the hard stop of 5 p.m. The early closure in the evening encourages recreators to make unsafe decisions in order to rush back to their cars. Many commenters would like to see the park gate open until 7 p.m. or later, with the option for those already in the park boundary to exit when they are done recreating.

With regard to the gate and road, commenters have experienced unreliable plowing and inconsistent gate opening with not enough communication. Commenters shared that snow removal delays can take multiple hours when only 1 to 3 inches of snow is on the ground. Commenters would like to be able to drive while snow plows are working to reduce the time delayed from snow removals. Commenters would like communication to be improved on the park website/twitter so that gate access limitations are more consistently known by visitors prior

to arriving at the entrance station. Commenters want gate opening announcements to occur online and on signs outside of the park on a consistent schedule, ideally more than two hours in advance to accommodate visitors with longer drives to the park. Lastly, commenters would like to see more clear separation of winter recreation user groups, higher access to warm facilities, and ranger stations open on weekdays for added safety.