



United States Department of the Interior

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



IN REPLY REFER TO:

D18 (GRCA 8217)

SEP 04 2008

Subject: Public Scoping for Train Operations at Grand Canyon National Park

Reference: Request for Comments

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service (NPS) is now accepting public comments on the future operation of train service within Grand Canyon National Park. The NPS proposes to allow up to three round-trip passenger trains per day from Williams to the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park and one round-trip evening train ride per day from the South Rim to a short distance outside of the park.

The purpose of this action is to provide a viable alternative for vehicle access to the South Rim and one that allows visitors the opportunity to experience the historic use of trains in the park. The South Rim of the Grand Canyon receives approximately 4.5 million visitors each year. During 2007, over 230,000 of these visitors arrived by train. In accordance with the Grand Canyon National Park's 1995 General Management Plan, the continued use of the train service "will encourage alternatives to private automobile travel to Grand Canyon."

The primary objectives for this planning effort are as follows:

- to assess the opportunity for more visitors to enter the park without relying on a private vehicle;
- to maintain the historic use of the train in the park;
- to assess the opportunity for visitors in the park to enjoy the Grand Canyon via the evening train ride;
- to ensure compatibility with current transportation options in the South Rim Transportation Plan;
- and to cooperate with gateway communities, Native American tribes, agencies and other stakeholders to achieve mutual transportation goals.

The NPS will evaluate the operation of train service including allowing up to three trains per day plus one evening train. Currently, each of the trains on a round trip from Williams to the Grand Canyon carries a maximum of 1,046 passengers. Each of the evening trains on a round trip carries approximately 322 passengers.



The evening train ride would operate from May to September. Weekly work trains and occasional special use trains would also be permitted within the park. Tracks five and six are currently unused and may be put into operation to make use of the original track configuration which allows for more convenient and safer passenger loading and unloading near the Grand Canyon Depot.

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

The NPS encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process. The public will have two opportunities to formally comment on the project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the Environmental Assessment.

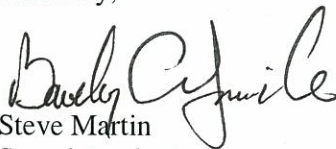
We are currently in the initial scoping phase of this project and invite you to submit comments related to the information contained in this letter and/or your experience with the railway. Additional information on this project and other planning efforts at Grand Canyon National Park, can be found at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>. If you wish to submit any comments during this initial public scoping period we encourage you to do so online at this website, please select the link for the Train Service at Grand Canyon National Park. Comments may also be mailed to the Park Superintendent at the address below. This initial public scoping period will be open for 30 days beginning September 4, 2008 and ending October 4, 2008. If you wish to submit comments on the proposed train operation, please do so by this date.

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

Before including your address, telephone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.

We appreciate your input on this project. If you have any questions, please contact Paula Homan, Project Planning Leader, at (928) 638-7956 or Laura Shearin, Project Manager, at (928) 226-0169.

Sincerely,


For Steve Martin
Superintendent