



## Accessibility Self Evaluation and Transition Plan (SETP) Summary of Public Comment and Response

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI) solicited public feedback on the Draft Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (SETP or plan) during a 30-day public comment period extending from July 26 through August 27, 2021.

The availability of the plan and associated public comment period were announced through the following venues: 1) a press release, 2) an email, with press release, to individuals and/or organizations in the parks' contact database, 3) social media posts, and 4) two webpages – one on the parks' website and another hosted on the National Park Service's (NPS) Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website which included the full plan and provided an opportunity to submit comments on the plan virtually. The Independent Living Center of Kern County, the parks' most active accessibility partner, was directly notified of the planning effort and availability of the plan for review, and the NPS sent a letter to all tribes associated with SEKI inviting feedback and direct government to government consultation on the planning effort. Public comments were accepted via email, letter, and the PEPC website.

In addition to the above, the NPS hosted a virtual public meeting on the plan on August 10, 2021. An estimated three members of the public attended.

The NPS received three correspondences during the public comment period. Public meeting and comment feedback included the need for the parks to ensure sufficient accessible recreational vehicle (RV) and van parking in additional locations and for all campgrounds to meet the requirements under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) for quantity, distribution, and universal design. There was also a request for clarification on current accessible routes to the Grant Grove Post Office. Below is a full summary of the public comments, as well as the NPS' response to comments—which included some modifications to the plan as appropriate.

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### Comments Proposing Additional Actions

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#### CONCERN STATEMENT:

One commenter stated that the plan did not provide sufficient accessible RV parking and/or accessible routes in several key locations. This commenter suggested these be added in the Cedar Grove Campground, Columbine Day Use Area, Foothills Visitor Center, the Ash Mountain Entrance Station, Grant Tree, Grant Village, and Hospital Rock.

#### Representative Quote(s):

- *“Provide an accessible RV space and accessible route.”*
- *“Show ORAR [(Outdoor Recreation Access Route)] to accessible restroom, water, trash, and other amenities provided.”*

#### RESPONSE:

The NPS understands there is interest in additional accessible RV parking spaces within the parks and will continue to consider adding accessible RV parking and associated routes as the plan is implemented.

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**CONCERN STATEMENT:**

One commenter indicated that the SETP does not adequately address the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard (ABAAS) requirements at Azalea Campground.

Representative Quote(s):

- *“SETP identifies eight campsites to be made accessible. They are all adjacent to each other. This does not meet ABAAS scoping requirements for dispersal throughout the campground. It doesn't allow large family groups (common in Sequoia) to get one accessible and one non accessible site next to each other. This design also sets a poor precedent for inclusive design by segregating all the accessible sites in one location.”*

**RESPONSE:**

The NPS understands there is benefit to dispersing accessible campsites throughout Azalea campground and will continue to consider distribution of companion and universal design campsites and amenities in park campgrounds as the plan is implemented.

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**CONCERN STATEMENT:**

One commenter questioned whether one ABA campsite in Cedar Grove was adequate.

Representative Quote(s):

- *“Is one accessible campsite (in Cedar Grove) adequate?”*

**RESPONSE:**

Thank you for your concern regarding the availability of ABA campsites in Cedar Grove. In accordance with the ABA, as facilities are improved, the NPS will continue to apply outdoor recreation quantities and distribution to campgrounds both in Cedar Grove and parks wide as outlined in the SETP timeline.

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**CONCERN STATEMENT:**

One commenter suggested that the plan should identify a van accessible space at Columbine Day Use Area or request a waiver if terrain does not allow for such a space to be created.

Representative Quote(s):

- *“Car parking 2 states if an accessible space is provided - this plan should identify that a van accessible space is required, if terrain does not allow this then a waiver should be sought.”*

**RESPONSE:**

The Draft SETP identified a van accessible space at Columbine Day Use Area. Please see sheet 49, location 01 of the plan.

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**CONCERN STATEMENT:**

One commenter expressed concern that wheeled conveyance was not allowed along trails in Mineral King Valley and proposed that an elevated boardwalk be constructed in Mineral King Valley to support increased access.

Representative Quote(s):

- *“Several years ago my daughter and I got in trouble with the enforcement ranger for taking my one year old grandson out the old road to the ford that crosses the East Fork, in a jogging stroller. No wheeled conveyance allowed on the trails.”*
- *“My proposal is an Elevated Boardwalk be built from the end of the existing corral road out to this ford, around the small hill the old road goes over. This type of access is now in common use throughout our National Park System. It can be built with very little impact to the ecosystem. This*

*would allow people in wheelchairs or people with walkers and just about everyone to have access to this beautiful spot.”*

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**RESPONSE:**

Thank you for your concern for those with physical disabilities and their access to and along trails within Mineral King. Many areas beyond the road, parking, and residential/commercial areas of Mineral King are designated wilderness, and the Wilderness Act typically prohibits wheeled conveyance within the designated areas. The exception is for wheelchairs or Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD) (as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act), which are permitted throughout Mineral King including the surrounding wilderness. Notably, federal law prohibits the use of strollers, manual powered bicycles, and e-bikes other than those being used as an OPDMD, in wilderness.

In addition to the consideration above, the SETP did not identify trail access within Mineral King as a key park experience to which ABA access or an equivalent experience is needed; so, there were no barriers identified as needing correction in this area. Consideration of a boardwalk therefore lies outside the scope of the SETP, and the proposal is not addressed in this planning document.

At this time, the NPS has not identified any resource concerns or access impediments necessitating increased trail development or realignment in this area of Mineral King. Should a need be identified in the future, alternatives to meeting park management objectives would be evaluated for consistency with federal legislation and park planning documents, as well as feasibility, priority, and cost.

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**CONCERN STATEMENT:**

One commenter questioned whether there was an accessible route to the Grant Grove Post Office.

Representative Quote(s):

- *“Is there an accessible route to the post office? Is it the closest parking?”*

**RESPONSE:**

The NPS did not note any barriers to the Grant Grove Post office in Grant Village. Any future design will take into consideration maintaining accessible access and universal design throughout the Grant Grove Village.

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**Comments Supporting a Different Alternative**

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**CONCERN STATEMENT:**

One commenter questioned the need for extensive pavement at the entrance sign to Sequoia National Park; suggesting that native plants would make the area look less urban.

Representative Quote(s):

- *“Is that much paving required at the entrance sign? Access to the sign with wheelchair space beside, but providing native planting in front would provide a more historic view more in keeping with the national park and less urban looking as diagrammed.”*

**RESPONSE:**

The scope of the SETP identified the barriers at the entrance sign and proposed timeline to remove the barriers. Though beyond the scope of the SETP, additional modifications that are consistent with federal law and policy, park planning objectives, and park priorities could be considered in the future.