



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park

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Grand Canyon News Release

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National Park Service Announces Availability of Environmental Assessment for Train Operations in Grand Canyon National Park

Grand Canyon, Ariz. – Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent Steve Martin today announced the availability of an Environmental Assessment (EA) for Train Operations in the park. The EA will be available for public review and comment for a period of 30 days, beginning June 29, 2009.

The EA evaluates two alternatives including a no-action alternative. The no-action alternative would continue current train operations, which typically consist of one to two trains from Williams, (AZ) per day, special use trains and events, and work trains. Currently, there are no limits on daily trains or special use trains and events under the existing contract.

The action alternative (Preferred Alternative) allows for current operations to continue with a maximum of three trains per day from Williams. The action alternative also allows special use trains, events, and work trains to continue and includes several improvements to the depot. Special use trains and events would be limited to 30 annually. Work trains would run as needed to maintain the rails and crossings, approximately two work trains per week currently utilize tracks inside the park boundary. Operational and safety improvements would include installation of ground power to run power to cars while trains are parked at the depot, and possible restoration of tracks 5 and 6, which are currently unused and partially covered with gravel. Additional interpretive opportunities would improve under the action alternative including the possible display of an historic steam engine.

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Another alternative was proposed for an excursion train, which would have operated in late afternoon or evening hours. That alternative was considered and dismissed due to its conflict with the purpose and need, and objectives of the project. Specifically, the excursion train is not a historic use of the rail lines and depot. The excursion train does not reduce the number of vehicles entering the park, and finally, the excursion train does not enhance visitor experience or opportunities for interpretation in the park since it travels out of the park to the Apex/Imbleau siding in Kaibab National Forest.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, calls on federal agencies to consider environmental issues as part of their decision making process and to involve interested parties in the process. The NEPA process was initiated in September 2008 with a public scoping letter soliciting issues and concerns on preliminary project proposals. Responses to these scoping efforts were used during preparation of the EA.

The EA will be on public review for 30 days. The document can be reviewed online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> by clicking on the project name, and then scrolling to “Open for Public Comments.” Comments can also be submitted online at the same Web address (the preferred method) or mailed to Steve Martin, Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Attention: Train Operations, P.O. Box 129 (1 Village Loop for express mail), Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023. **Comments will be accepted through July 29, 2009.**

The NPS encourages public participation through the NEPA process. After the public review period, the comments received will be carefully considered before a decision is made regarding implementation of the Train Operations Plan.

For additional information, please contact Rachel Stanton, Environmental Protection Specialist, at (928) 774-9612.

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