

# Visitor Access Management Plan Public Comment Summary Report

Yosemite National Park  
December 2023

## Executive Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing a Visitor Access Management Plan (the plan) to support sustainable access, high-quality recreation experiences, visitor safety, and resource protection at Yosemite National Park (the park). Providing for and managing visitor use at the park is increasingly complex due to growth in day-use visitation and changing use patterns. The NPS is concerned about the increasing impacts on natural and cultural resources, the quality of the visitor experience, visitor and staff safety, and the heavy strain on the park's facilities and ability to perform daily operations. This plan will address congestion, crowding, and preventing damage to resources within the park.

As a part of this process, the NPS will evaluate different management strategies, including implementing a reservation system, enhancing trip planning, upgrading and modernizing entrance stations, expanding bicycle and pedestrian options, improving transit and shuttle opportunities, and updating infrastructure. These strategies will help the park manage visitation to meet long-term resource protection, support high-quality public access and visitor experience goals, and protect the park in the future. This planning process will leverage the park's already extensive planning and decision-making portfolio that sets the foundation for considering how to best meet the goals that were identified in these plans.

The NPS first solicited feedback on potential management strategies December 9, 2022, to February 3, 2022. NPS initiated a second public input period for the proposed plan in Yosemite National Park on July 6, 2023, to further gather public and community feedback about strategies for managing visitor access in order to inform the plan development process. The top categories identified by commenters in the first public input period were related to maintaining access to the park, how the reservation system is implemented, the role of park roads and infrastructure in crowding, providing multimodal access, and park staffing and enforcement. This second round of public involvement solicited ideas on draft management concepts that were developed following the first public involvement period.

The park released a news release on June 29, 2023, with information about the plan, a link to comment on the project, and registration information for the virtual public meeting. The park also provided supplemental materials, including a newsletter, a Frequently Asked Questions document, and the link to a *StoryMaps* for the plan at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/740d505858b4481ab78be809080d425b>.

The supplemental materials provided information about the park background, planning process, park purpose and significance, key location, purpose and need for the plan, and potential strategies. The park encouraged the public to submit comments through the NPS's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/YosemiteVisitorAccessSummer2023>. Comments were also accepted by US mail and email.

With the release of the newsletter, Frequently Asked Questions document, and *StoryMap*, the park held a public comment period that began on July 6, 2023, and ended on September 6, 2023. The park held one virtual public meeting during this period at which park staff and planners provided an overview of the potential strategies, described how to provide public comments, and hosted a question-and-answer session. The date, location, and time of the public meeting are provided below:

- Virtual Meeting
  - Wednesday, July 19, 2023
  - 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. PT

The NPS considered all comments from members of the public, including comments received directly by the park through US mail or email, and those entered in PEPC. A total of 1,684 pieces of correspondence were received during the public comment period. This Public Comment Summary Report summarizes the suggestions and concerns expressed during the public comment period.

# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....                                    | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>COMMENT ANALYSIS</b> .....                                     | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>DEFINITION OF TERMS</b> .....                                  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>COMMENT ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY</b> .....                         | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED</b> .....                              | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>COMMENT SUMMARIES</b> .....                                    | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>PROMPTING QUESTIONS AND COMMENT SUMMARY STRUCTURE</b> .....    | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>ISSUES: VISITOR EXPERIENCE</b> .....                           | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>ISSUES: TRAFFIC CONGESTION, PARKING LOT CONGESTION</b> .....   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>ISSUES: ENTRANCE STATIONS – QUEUES AND FEES</b> .....          | <b>12</b> |
| <b>ISSUES: NATURAL RESOURCES</b> .....                            | <b>12</b> |
| <b>ISSUES: CULTURAL RESOURCES</b> .....                           | <b>15</b> |
| <b>ISSUES: PARK ENFORCEMENT AND PARK STAFFING</b> .....           | <b>16</b> |
| <b>ISSUES: ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITABLE ACCESS</b> .....           | <b>18</b> |
| <b>ISSUES: SOCIOECONOMICS</b> .....                               | <b>21</b> |
| <b>PLANNING, DATA, AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS</b> .....               | <b>23</b> |
| <b>RESERVATION SYSTEMS</b> .....                                  | <b>30</b> |
| <b>OTHER PERMIT TYPES</b> .....                                   | <b>33</b> |
| <b>LOCATION/AREA-SPECIFIC RESERVATIONS</b> .....                  | <b>34</b> |
| <b>PARKING LOT SPECIFIC RESERVATIONS</b> .....                    | <b>35</b> |
| <b>RESERVATION TIMING</b> .....                                   | <b>36</b> |
| <b>RESERVATION SYSTEM</b> .....                                   | <b>38</b> |
| <b>EXEMPTIONS/SPECIAL PASSES FROM RESERVATIONS</b> .....          | <b>42</b> |
| <b>ARCH ROCK ENTRANCE STATION UPGRADE AND MODERNIZATION</b> ..... | <b>47</b> |
| <b>TIOGA PASS ENTRANCE UPGRADE AND MODERNIZATION</b> .....        | <b>47</b> |
| <b>ENTRANCE STATIONS – GENERAL</b> .....                          | <b>48</b> |
| <b>HORSETAIL FALL RESERVATIONS</b> .....                          | <b>50</b> |
| <b>BIG WALL CLIMBING PERMITS</b> .....                            | <b>51</b> |
| <b>TRIP PLANNING</b> .....  | <b>52</b> |
| <b>BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS</b> .....                        | <b>55</b> |
| <b>ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION</b> .....                           | <b>58</b> |
| <b>SHUTTLES – ACCESS FROM OUTSIDE THE PARK</b> .....              | <b>59</b> |
| <b>SHUTTLES – CONNECTIVITY WITH REGIONAL TRANSIT</b> .....        | <b>60</b> |
| <b>SHUTTLES – INTERNAL PARK SHUTTLE</b> .....                     | <b>62</b> |
| <b>SHUTTLES – OTHER</b> .....                                     | <b>64</b> |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE – ROADS AND PARKING LOTS</b> .....              | <b>65</b> |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE – PARK FACILITIES</b> .....                     | <b>71</b> |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE – DISTRIBUTION OF VISITATION</b> .....          | <b>73</b> |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE – OTHER</b> .....                               | <b>75</b> |
| <b>OTHER ELEMENTS</b> .....                                       | <b>76</b> |

# Comment Analysis

## Definition of Terms

**Correspondence:** A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter and includes letters; written comment forms; comments entered directly into the PEPC database; and any other written comments provided either at the public meetings, by postal mail, or in person at the park.

**Comment:** A comment is a portion of text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject such as "purpose and need" or "other management suggestions." The comment could also question the accuracy of the information provided in the newsletter, question the adequacy of any background information, or present reasonable alternatives other than the potential actions presented in the newsletter.

**Code:** A code is a grouping centered on a common subject. The codes were developed during the comment analysis process and are used to track major issues. In cases where no comments are received on an issue, the code is not identified or discussed in this report.

**Comment Summary:** A grouping that is centered on a common subject. Comment summaries combine similar comments.

## Comment Analysis Methodology

Correspondence was received by hard copy letter via US mail, email, or entered directly into the PEPC system. The park entered letters received through the US mail or email into the PEPC system for analysis. Once all correspondence was entered into PEPC, each was read, and specific comments within each unique correspondence were identified. When identifying comments, every attempt was made to capture the full breadth of comments submitted.

To categorize comments, each comment was given a code to identify its general content and to group similar comments. An example of a code developed for this project is *IS1000 – Issues: Visitor Experience*. Once every correspondence was broken into comments, all comments were categorized and summarized with similar comments and comment summaries were created.

## Correspondence Received

The following tables were produced by the NPS PEPC database and provide information about the numbers and types of correspondence received, organized by code and by various demographics. The tables present data on the number of correspondences received by correspondence type, organization type, state, and country. One table provides information on which organizations commented during the comment period.

Also included below is a table detailing the number of comments identified by code. A total of 3,470 individual comments were derived from the 1,684 correspondences received.

**TABLE 1. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY CORRESPONDENCE TYPE**

| Correspondence Type | Correspondences |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Web Form            | 1677            |
| E-mail              | 2               |
| Other               | 5               |

**TABLE 2. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY ORGANIZATION TYPE**

| Organization Type            | Correspondences |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unaffiliated Individual      | 1612            |
| Business                     | 33              |
| Conservation/Preservation    | 17              |
| Non-Governmental             | 5               |
| NPS Employee                 | 4               |
| Civic Groups                 | 3               |
| Non-NPS Employee in the Park | 3               |
| Recreational Groups          | 3               |
| County Government            | 2               |
| Federal Government           | 1               |
| Town or City Government      | 1               |

**TABLE 3. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY ORGANIZATION**

| Organization  | Comment ID |
|---|------------|
| <b>Businesses</b>   |            |
| Yosemite Blue Butterfly Inn   | 1422       |
| Bettes Yosemite Bed and Breakfast   | 1363, 1364 |
| Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP on behalf of Big Creek Inn                           | 1057       |
| CA Consulting   | 1671       |
| Callahan Capital Partners   | 1125       |
| Evergreen & Rush Creek Lodges   | 1678       |
| Extranomical Tours, Best Bay Area Tours, Incredible Adventures, Grayline of San Francisco | 1618       |
| Foothills Resources LTD   | 1159       |
| Good Trip Adventures  | 201        |
| Gregory G Campbell LLC  | 686        |

| <b>Organization</b>                              | <b>Comment ID</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| Hazel Green Ranch LLC                            | 972, 1021         |
| Incredible Adventures                            | 1540              |
| Kennan Ward Photography                          | 1343              |
| Lasting Adventures Inc                           | 743               |
| Law offices of David C MacPherson                | 1240              |
| Little Cloud Ranch                               | 7                 |
| Mammoth Lakes Tourism                            | 975               |
| Nature Outings                                   | 1004              |
| OTO Development                                  | 1550              |
| Recreation Equipment Inc (REI)                   | 1145              |
| Sierra Rec Magazine                              | 1133              |
| Summit and Sur Photography                       | 464               |
| Delaware North                                   | 1477              |
| Teton Editorial Services                         | 1551              |
| Ansel Adams Gallery                              | 1                 |
| Wildland Trekking Company                        | 1187              |
| Yosemite Guide2Go                                | 137               |
| Balanced Rock                                    | 1009              |
| Yosemite Photo Workshops                         | 119               |
| Bravo Travel                                     | 857               |
| Spring Gulch Farms                               | 471               |
| <b>Civic Groups</b>                              |                   |
| Fair Oaks EcoHousing                             | 997               |
| Tuolumne County Lodging Association              | 1178              |
| Yosemite Mariposa County Tourism Bureau          | 1241              |
| <b>Conservation/Preservation</b>                 |                   |
| Central Sierra Environmental Research Center     | 1401, 1371        |
| CalWild  | 1676, 1682        |
| Californians for Western Wilderness              | 1517              |
| National Park Conservation Association           | 1629              |
| NatureBridge                                     | 1056              |
| Restore Hetch Hetchy                             | 1681              |
| Sierra Club                                      | 1080              |
| The Coalition to Protect Americas National Parks | 1580              |

| Organization                              | Comment ID |
|---|------------|
| Tuolumne River Trust                      | 1498, 1503 |
| Upper Merced River Watershed Council      | 1624       |
| Wild Heritage                             | 993        |
| Yosemite Conservancy                      | 1651       |
| <b>County Government</b>                  |            |
| County of Tuolumne - Board of Supervisors | 1571       |
| <b>Federal Government</b>                 |            |
| US Representative Tom McClintock          | 1680       |
| <b>Town or City Government</b>            |            |
| Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce            | 1625       |
| Mono County Board of Supervisors          | 1609       |
| <b>Non-Governmental</b>                   |            |
| American Hotel and Lodging Association    | 1489       |
| California Hotel and Lodging Association  | 1500       |
| Fish Camp Fire Association                | 808        |
| Sierra Vista Scenic Byway                 | 729        |
| National Heritage Institute               | 847, 1092  |
| <b>Recreational Groups</b>                |            |
| Access Fund                               | 1546       |
| Camp Tawonga                              | 1606       |
| Sierra Freepacker                         | 1454       |

**TABLE 4. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTRY**

| Country                        | Correspondences |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| United States                  | 1669            |
| Canada                         | 4               |
| Netherlands                    | 3               |
| United Kingdom                 | 2               |
| Germany                        | 2               |
| Federated States of Micronesia | 1               |
| Argentina                      | 1               |
| Denmark                        | 1               |
| Australia                      | 1               |

**TABLE 5. CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY STATE**

| State          | Correspondences | State                | Correspondences |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| California     | 1389            | Arkansas             | 3               |
| Nevada         | 34              | Maine                | 3               |
| Colorado       | 24              | Maryland             | 3               |
| Oregon         | 22              | Missouri             | 3               |
| Utah           | 17              | District of Columbia | 3               |
| Washington     | 17              | Nebraska             | 2               |
| Texas          | 16              | Kansas               | 2               |
| Arizona        | 14              | Iowa                 | 2               |
| Unknown        | 12              | Mississippi          | 2               |
| Florida        | 11              | Vermont              | 2               |
| Illinois       | 9               | Indiana              | 2               |
| Michigan       | 9               | Alaska               | 2               |
| Pennsylvania   | 9               | Idaho                | 2               |
| North Carolina | 8               | Kentucky             | 1               |
| Ohio           | 8               | Delaware             | 1               |
| New York       | 7               | Wyoming              | 1               |
| New Mexico     | 6               | West Virginia        | 1               |
| Montana        | 5               | North Dakota         | 1               |
| South Carolina | 5               | Tennessee            | 1               |
| Georgia        | 4               | New Hampshire        | 1               |
| Minnesota      | 4               | Virginia             | 1               |
| Massachusetts  | 4               | Rhode Island         | 1               |
| Wisconsin      | 4               | South Dakota         | 1               |
| New Jersey     | 4               |                      |                 |

**TABLE 6. NUMBER OF COMMENTS PER CODE**

| Code   | Number of Comments |
|--|--------------------|
| Reservation and Timed-Entry System - Support | 850                |
| Shuttles - Internal Park Shuttle             | 304                |
| Entrance Station - General                   | 287                |
| Shuttles - Access from outside the park      | 268                |
| Reservation System                           | 267                |

| <b>Code</b>   | <b>Number of Comments</b> |
|---|---------------------------|
| Exemptions / Special Passes                                     | 221                       |
| Bicycle and Pedestrian Access                                   | 219                       |
| Reservation Timing  | 196                       |
| Trip Planning   | 145                       |
| Infrastructure - Roads and Parking Lots                         | 134                       |
| Alternative Transportation                                      | 133                       |
| Shuttles - Connectivity with Regional Transit                   | 132                       |
| Parking Lot Specific Reservations                               | 115                       |
| Infrastructure - Park Facilities                                | 115                       |
| Issues - Park Enforcement and Park Staffing                     | 108                       |
| Elements - Reservation and Timed-Entry System                   | 102                       |
| Infrastructure - Distribution of Visitation                     | 101                       |
| Miscellaneous   | 72                        |
| Reservation and Timed-Entry System - Oppose                     | 69                        |
| Location/Area-Specific Reservations                             | 63                        |
| Issues - Accessibility and Equitable Access                     | 55                        |
| NEPA Issues   | 52                        |
| General Support   | 35                        |
| Elements - Arch Rock Entrance Station Upgrade and Modernization | 32                        |
| Other Permit Types  | 30                        |
| Issues - Traffic Congestion, Parking Lot Congestion             | 29                        |
| Issues - Natural Resources                                      | 29                        |
| Issues - Visitor Experience                                     | 26                        |
| Issues – Entrance Stations - Queues and Fees                    | 22                        |
| Issues – Socioeconomics   | 18                        |
| Tioga Pass Entrance Upgrade and Modernization                   | 18                        |
| Other Elements  | 16                        |
| Duplicate Comment   | 13                        |
| Infrastructure – Other  | 11                        |
| Elements – Horsetail Falls Reservations                         | 10                        |
| Shuttles – Other  | 8                         |
| Issues – Cultural Resources                                     | 8                         |
| Elements – Big Wall Climbing Permits                            | 5                         |
| General Oppose  | 2                         |

## Comment Summaries

### Prompting Questions and Comment Summary Structure

Two questions were posed to commenters to receive targeted feedback for the development of the Visitor Access Management Plan.

1. Based on your desired conditions for resources and experiences (how you arrive and visit the park), which of the listed strategies (or combination of strategies) do you think best achieve the purpose of the plan?
2. Are there other strategies or changes to listed strategies that should be considered and analyzed that are not already presented?

Within the comment summary that follows, major concepts and unique perspectives are represented from the comments received during the comment period.

### Issues: Visitor Experience

#### Improved Park Programs and Education

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Commenters requested that the park expand the programs they provide in order to improve visitor experience. Commenters suggested programs such as ranger walks, living history education, programs covering outdoor basics and trail etiquette, “Leave No Trace” classes, and programming catered toward people spending multiple nights in the park. One commenter suggested surveying visitors about what they have learned during their visit to help improve or create new programs.

#### *Representative Quotes*

Comments: Topic Question 2:

There is a lack of Ranger programming compared to previous years.

The park seems to cater towards day visitors than people staying overnight (even more so multiple nights).

Restaurants and shops closed early, no buses after 7pm, no variety in large dining halls.

There needs to be more “living history”. As a former Park Interpretive Ranger recently said “A building with just signs and photos is just a building. A building with someone present, talking about the exhibit and telling stories, is an experience. Visitors will remember the person and the stories, but not the buildings by themselves.” I realize that you will say you don’t have staffing or funding, but if you are serious about improving the visitor experience, this is what you need to do!

#### Negative Visitor Outreach

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Commenters provided examples of negative visitor experiences they have had with the park, particularly involving park outreach, and provided examples of how to improve these issues. One commenter noted that the park’s wilderness office consistently would not answer the phone and suggested adding a hold option so that visitors do not feel dismissed and do not need to keep calling back. One commenter expressed how the park’s social media does not send a welcoming message and suggested that the park should update it to improve the park’s reputation.

### **Representative Quotes**

A wilderness office phone line that has hold (you can't seriously expect people to just keep calling back waiting for an answer. It's so clear that you just don't want to provide services / answer questions and that feels antithetical to the mission of the wilderness rangers)

The culture and general vibe of Yosemite's Instagram page shouts out "PLEASE DON'T COME. WE DON'T WANT YOU. YOU ANNOY US." Please take into consideration if this culture is coming from leadership and trickling down into all levels of management. Most often, the posts on Yosemite's social media are very negative, demeaning, and down right cranky. This contributes to the reputation that people have of Yosemite. For myself, I started following other national parks on social media to see if this culture was normal with other parks. So far, I haven't found that to be true of other national parks social media pages. Please consider the impact that this kind of culture has on visitors. Servant leadership within an organization can change so many problems. Please don't underestimate the effect that the culture of Yosemite National Park leadership has on visitor experience.

### **Visitor Safety**

Commenters expressed concern about the impact of crowding on visitor safety. Commenters noted dangerous crowding along roadsides, on bike paths, on the Mist Trail, and at Vernal Fall. One commenter expressed concern that the reservation system would lead to more climbing-related accidents, because reservations could influence climbers to climb when they are either unprepared or during unsafe conditions since they have an assigned timeframe in the park. One commenter noted that campground rules, such as using bear boxes, were not enforced and could lead to unsafe conditions for all campers. Commenters suggested creating interactive materials to help educate people on safely enjoying the park.

### **Representative Quotes**

However, a reservation system significantly restricts the ability to recreate in Yosemite and I believe it will lead to more climbing related accidents. Physical fitness and weather conditions, river flows, snow, and other variables are key factors when deciding what and when to climb. A reservation system will force climbers to climb "because I have a reservation" rather than waiting for a safer climbing window. I believe this will lead to more accidents for inexperienced climbers or it will severely restrict climbing opportunities for climbers that "play it safe" and cancel their climb because fitness, weather, and reservations do not line up. Either way its a lose-lose for climbers. Unlike much of the other recreational opportunities in Yosemite; climbing in the Valley or Tuolumne can only be found in a handful of places throughout the world.

There was dangerous conditions with too many people on the stairs at vernal falls as well as a rattlesnake on the very busy mist trail but no ranger to report to.

Visitors are ill-equipped to visit Yosemite and carve an exceptional experience. Once, on a run along the rim above Yosemite Valley in October it snowed, and I encountered backpackers with only shorts on, wading into 3-inch deep snow. I literally gave one couple the clothes off my back, and couple got my M & M peanuts. Yosemite NP needs a comic book that people will read and learn how to conduct themselves in the Valley, including safety at the falls. Most visitors are experienced restaurant users, and they can use the restaurants in Curry & Yosemite villages. But most people have never planned a hike or considered a bike ride around the floor (which we walked twice a year with our dog.) Yosemite is breath-taking, its scenery even exorbitant, but Yosemite is not an art museum, which is how most visitors treat it without the knowledge of science.

The park lacks the ability to fulfill its mission when it is overcrowded and it is dangerous to have so many cars, pedestrians walking along the road.

## Visitor Overcrowding

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Commenters expressed displeasure about the volume of people in the park and were concerned about the impacts of crowding on visitor experience. Commenters cited crowding in shuttles and on bike paths, as well as congested parking lots as negative aspects of their park experience.

Commenters requested that the park limit the number of guests allowed in the park at one time to improve overall visitor experience.

### Representative Quotes

Topic Question 1:

With my most recent visit in August 2023, I noticed a huge difference in atmosphere compared to when I had last been in 2019. While we arrived later in the day, we still had issues finding adequate parking for our week long overnight reservation at Curry Village. There were many day visitors within the overnight area. I think almost all of the strategies would positively impact visitor experience in YNP. It has become so overcrowded even on "low" days. I noticed with biking as well, as that it one of our favorite ways to explore the valley, it was very difficult to bike at times due to people walking on designated bike paths, or not staying on the proper side of the road.

We additionally had the issue of shuttle buses when we did not bike. Many times we waited over 30 minutes for a bus that was either full, going out of service, or just never arrived. With the construction, there were no updates on the elongated bus route around the valley. It was a mess. Felt extremely frustrated and eaten up by mosquitos waiting for buses that never came.

You need to do something to curb tourism stop being greedy and protect the locals the tourists are destroying the nature, committing arson and disturbing the people who pay to live here. This is unacceptable. they are leaving trash, diapers, needles, all in our rivers and forests. grow some balls and make reservations permanent. Tourism is dead.

I have been coming to Yosemite since I was a child and I have seen how the increasing amount of visitors have effected the experience of the park over the years. Increasing amounts of trash everywhere, congestion on the roads and trails, people feeding wildlife, etc. Obviously there are financial and logistical factors that play a big role in implementing reservation systems, etc, I think that by reducing the amount of people let into the park can improve overall visitors experiences as well as helps to make sure the environment is treated with respect and care, which is ultimately why the national park system was created.

I found the current visitor experience sad and unacceptable. I was unable to experience Yosemite the way I have frequently done so in the past. I was so depressed during my last visit..no parking; wall- to-wall automobile backups; walking paths extremely overcrowded. I turned around and left after two hours in the Park.

The current, unchecked level of visitation to the park creates a very unpleasant visitor experience. Overcrowding of all places or interest, facilities and transportation is a huge frustration.

## Issues: Traffic Congestion, Parking Lot Congestion

### Emergency Services

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Commenters noted that existing congestion conditions can be a safety concern, as they do not allow emergency vehicles, such as fire trucks and ambulances, to swiftly respond to incidents.

Furthermore, existing congestion conditions would not allow visitors to quickly evacuate the park if needed. Commenters requested that the park consider evacuation and emergency service impacts when developing the plan. Commenters specifically requested that the park consider wildfire danger and evacuation routes in the case of fire. Suggested solutions for emergency access included:

- Adding a lane at entrance gates for employees, volunteers, and emergency service vehicles
- Coordinating with local emergency services to ensure efficient emergency response

- Improving communication systems among park staff, emergency services, and visitors to facilitate evacuation and emergency response

**Representative Quotes**

|   |
|---|
| <p>Entering the gates alone is a challenge and although some areas may be able to be widened eventually, that does not preclude the sheer number of people who may be trying to enter at certain times of day. Especially for those employees, volunteers, and emergency service vehicles. I would like to see that group have their own gate of these several gates, each vehicle can pass through. In the areas that are typically most crowded with people waiting to get in and places that are possible lanes or curbs could also be widened so that at least emergency vehicles could squeeze past when necessary</p>   |
| <p>The current system of no limits for either cars or people is actually quite scary to me because extreme gridlock on the roads means that visitors are unable to evacuate in case of emergency (such as fire or flood) and emergency vehicles cannot get into park either. I think most National Parks are all eventually going to have to do set entrance limits for safety reasons at least.</p>  |
| <p>It is dangerous to guests visiting wilderness areas to have to wait exceedingly long times to be reached by emergency vehicles or assistance, especially during peak hours and seasons when dangers like heat stroke or dehydration are a risk not just for experienced adventurers in the more remote parts of the park (half dome, climbing, backpacking, etc), but also for the more populated locations as well.</p>   |
| <p>Coordinate with local emergency services to develop strategies that ensure efficient emergency response times, despite traffic congestion.<br/>Enhance communication systems between park staff, emergency services, and visitors to facilitate timely response and evacuation if necessary.</p>   |
| <p>I think one of the most important issues to consider is visitor safety. While the quality of a visitor experience is the issue most often discussed when considering new strategies, visitor safety is often overlooked. Currently, with the amount of visitor volume in the non-wilderness areas of the park, responding to any type of emergency is virtually impossible. Ambulances, fire personnel, law-enforcement personnel, travel is severely impacted by the sheer volume of people in the non-wilderness area of the park, mainly the valley and roads leading to the valley which could have result in devastating consequences in the event of a major catastrophe. Even a small catastrophe can turn into a major catastrophe, if the appropriate personnel are not able to respond in a timely manner.</p> |
| <p>Please consider the fire danger we have here as well, and the lack of evacuation routes especially now with Old Priest Grade being closed. You will complete chaos with out of towners trying to get out of here.</p>  |

**Existing Traffic Patterns**

Commenters shared concerns about specific existing traffic patterns that have caused issues. One commenter noted that the Highway 41 entrance is often so backed up that the lane for homeowners and people with park stickers is not accessible because it starts too close to the gate. Another commenter said that the one-way traffic flow on Northside Drive makes getting from Yosemite Lodge to the Valley impossible without driving to the El Capitan crossover, which is a significant addition to the trip.

### Representative Quotes

The current traffic pattern of one way flows on Northside Drive makes it impossible to get from Yosemite Lodge to the valley without driving to the El Capitan crossover. For Lodge guests and people who inadvertently find themselves that far, that is a significant additional drive when already in the village area. It is effective at improving the flow out of the valley, but not within

we are home owners in the Yosemite West community, and therefore we use the Highway 41 entrance to access our home, but I did not see that entrance as being one of the impacted points of entry into the park. I can confirm however that it has not been uncommon for the line to reach back past Tenya Lodge and we have even seen it as far back as the Sugar Pine Railroad...which I would guess is at least a 3-4 hour wait to the gate. There is a lane at the gate for home-owners or those with park stickers, but you cannot access it until you are only a few hundred yards from the gate, rendering it almost useless when the traffic is heavy. There may not be a great solution to that issue, but it sure would be nice not to have to drive up at odd hours to avoid the delays.

### Traffic Congestion Impacts and Suggestions for Improvement

Commenters shared negative experiences they had related to traffic congestion in the park. Commenters noted that congestion in areas like Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, Mariposa Grove, Tuolumne Grove, Wawona, Crane Flat, and Glacier Point detracts from their visit. Commenters noted that the number of vehicles rather than the number of visitors contributes to impacts on congestion. Commenters explained that waiting in traffic can lead to heightened emotions and tense exchanges, detracting from their experience. Commenters shared experiences where they had secured reservations but were unable to enjoy the park because of congestion and long wait times in traffic, both inside and outside of the park.

Commenters provided suggestions for managing traffic congestion, including 1) collaborating with neighboring communities and transportation authorities to develop traffic management plans; 2) implementing synchronized traffic signals, traffic diversions, and shared transportation options; 3) deploying traffic control staff at key intersections and congested areas to aid in traffic flow, provide guidance, and manage parking areas; 4) routing visitors directly into parking lots to reduce traffic; 5) reviewing Valley floor traffic flow to clarify traffic patterns and prevent visitors from needing to take multiple laps; and 6) clarifying signage for Housekeeping Camp, Curry Village, the Valley Visitor Center, restrooms, and other attractions to help people navigate and reduce congestion.

### Representative Quotes

Prime visitor areas such as Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, Mariposa Grove, Tuolumne Grove, Wawona, Crane Flat, and Glacier Point cannot currently provide quality visitor experiences due to overcrowding and severe congestion

The problem seems to be the number of vehicles driven into the park, not the number of people who want to see it.

The current system for visitor access does not work well for visitors to properly enjoy the park. Endless waits to get in, followed by traffic jams in the valley, destroy enjoyment. Sadly, cars and the problems they cause bring out the worst in people. Visitors should properly be in awe of nature while in the valley rather than cursing the traffic.

I've had reservations at the lodge for a year now, and needed to drive from 5 hours away. I waited in line at park entrance for two hours and was unable to park at the lodge despite having a reservation. I came by myself with two young kids, all of our stuff, and three bikes. I did all the "right" things getting reservations ahead of time to make this a smooth trip with just one parent. Staff were overwhelmed. Staff at the lodge were like "sorry about your reservation you paid for and complete inability to access your room due to all the illegally parked cars, nothing we can do" . It was a disaster from start to finish due to the sheer volume of people in the park.

Review valley floor traffic flow. Very confusing and causing visitors to make multiple laps and causing even more traffic. Clearer signage for Housekeeping, Curry Village, Visitor Center, restrooms and major attractions.

Traffic Control Personnel: Deploy trained traffic control personnel at key intersections and congested areas to optimize traffic flow, manage parking areas, and provide guidance to visitors.

Collaborate with neighboring communities: Work closely with neighboring communities, including local governments and transportation authorities, to develop coordinated traffic management plans. Implement measures such as synchronized traffic signals, temporary traffic diversions, and shared transportation options to ease congestion in and around the park.

## Issues: Entrance Stations – Queues and Fees

### Park Entrance Fees

Commenters suggested increasing entrance fees. Specific suggestions for suggested increases included increased fees during peak hours or seasons, charging the fee according to vehicle weight, and adding an “environmental fee” for non-pass holders. Commenters further recommended that the park keep current discounted prices for certain groups (e.g., veterans and seniors).

#### *Representative Quotes*

Consider raising entrance fees slightly. Currently they are at \$35 per vehicle. Consider raising it to \$50 or charging a per person fee, keeping current t discounts (is veterans, elderly, etc.)

For non-pass holders, assess a \$5-\$10 per day "environmental fee" to help you provide additional staff/mitigate impact on the environment.

Increase fees during peak hours.

## Issues: Natural Resources

### Negative Impacts on the Environment

Commenters expressed concern regarding degradation of the park’s natural resources. Commenters encouraged the park to better manage visitor access to mitigate impacts to the environment, such as erosion from overuse and misuse of hiking trails, damage to trails caused by horses and commercial pack trains, degraded water quality from the use of lotions or soaps, lower air quality from the increased number of cars and long idling times while cars wait in entry lines, damage to natural areas from out-of-bounds parking, and polluted resources (e.g., bodies of water) from trash buildups. In particular, commenters expressed concern about campfires in the park. Commenters noted that smoke buildup from fires can impact air quality and visibility. Commenters suggested banning campfires altogether, banning campfires when weather conditions might lead to more smoke buildup, only permitting campfires for people without a heating or cooking source, only allowing

one staff-monitored fire per campground, and removing fire rings from larger campsites for RVs and trailers.

### **Representative Quotes**

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| CSERC asserts that the VAMP plan should start with the goal of establishing policies, strategies, and operational or facility management actions that will firmly "manage" visitation by holding it to a level that avoids degradation of the natural resources of the Park, does not frequently result in a negative visitor experience, and does not stress or affect the health and safety of Park and concessionaire employees.   |
| Implementing reservation systems seems like the best way to mitigate the continuing degradation of the park, but only if any reservation system reduces the number of cars and visitors entering the park each day. I've been visiting Yosemite for over fifty years, as a car camper and backpacker. During that time I've witnessed the toll suffered by the park, primarily because of too many visitors: extensive erosion from over- and misuse (i.e., shortcuts) of hiking trails; reduced water clarity in lakes, likely from suntan lotions and soaps; reduced air quality from the increasing numbers of cars and campfires; scared roadsides and parking areas where visitors park willy-nilly; increased traffic and the resultant long wait times in some areas; and, generally, the wear and tear on all park resources. |
| I know it has been discussed for years, but the removal of commercial pack trains in the park should be implemented. Hikers and backpackers far outnumber the horses but the damage caused by them is much more significant. For example, the flow of horses from Twin Lakes to Benson Lake has heavily damaged the trail and made the experience of camping at Benson Lake intolerable.  |
| The only thing I can suggest is some sort of 'no-burn' decree when the conditions are conducive to smoke buildup in the valley floor. The air quality is noticeably worse on days when either lots of people or lack of wind contribute to terrible air quality and/or visibility.  |
| No Campground Fires. Perhaps one group fire per campground that is monitored by a host or employee.   |
| Yes! No wood or charcoal fires in The Valley. One campers fire can ruin the entire experience.  |

## **Consideration for Natural Resources while Developing the Plan**

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With the rise in park popularity and an increase in tourism, commenters encouraged the park to prioritize the protection of natural resources. Commenters encouraged the park to rehabilitate the natural environment and have planning consistent with the Wild and Scenic requirements. Some commenters cited forest management techniques that involve thinning the forest to promote historic views of the park. Commenters also asked the park to consider climate change in its planning processes.

### **Representative Quotes**

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|--|
| Work with congressman Tom McClintock to thin the park's forests and open up historic views. I know many park staff (including me as a former NPS ranger) do not agree with him on many issues, but wise Forest management is an issue on which we can find common ground.  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Return Yosemite to its original state; a park focused on natural experiences, not a crowded urban extension.</li><li>2. Rehabilitate natural environments. Visitors traveling by foot will have much less impact.</li><li>3. Attract nature-minded visitors. Visitors willing to park their cars and take public transit to visit Yosemite value natural environments more than personal inconvenience.</li><li>4. Preserve Yosemite for generations to come. Current visitor volumes are unsustainable and exceed the carrying capacity of Yosemite National Park.</li><li>5. Promote wilderness experiences. Convert and expand tent camping sites. Visitors to Yosemite Valley and other sites traveling by NPS bus may use backpacks to transport camping equipment and food for their stays. This promotes a peaceful wilderness experience, rather than car-camping; which tends to bring urban environmental problems to Yosemite.</li></ol> |

I don't know to what extent this would be permitted under the NPS mandate, but I believe that park conservation should be prioritized above visitor access. I would much rather see Yosemite converted to a wilderness area than see it overrun by disrespectful tourists and converted into a set of parking lots and hotels. Consider that improving access and publicity of the parks may not be the best thing for the park or the American people in the long term.

My understanding is that the Merced River was designated "Wild and Scenic" several years ago. The Merced River Plan – "Establishes a visitor use and user capacity management program that addresses the kinds and amounts of public use that the river corridor can sustain while protecting and enhancing river values" Not requirements are about river health, NOT financial gain or maximizing the number of visitors or visitor experience. All Yosemite planning should have consistent goals with wild and scenic requirements being in the forefront.

## **Biodiversity and Wildlife Impacts**

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Commenters provided several factors that may impact wildlife and biodiversity in the park. Specifically, commenters stated that roads and bike trails pose a danger to wildlife and create barriers for wildlife to access required resources, such as water and food. Commenters stated that the creation of more infrastructure will only exacerbate these impacts on wildlife and their habitat, and that trash not properly disposed of could have a negative impact on wildlife and increase the potential for visitor-wildlife encounters. Commenters emphasize that the park provides critical habitat for wildlife, and efforts should be made to protect and sustain the biodiversity within the park.

### ***Representative Quotes***

My biggest problem with Yosemite is the roads - they dissect the Valley and cut off access to the river for wild animals, many of whom get run over just trying to get to water. Remove one of these roads and only allow the shuttles from the access points and people who have reservations to stay overnight at Camp Curry, the hotels or campgrounds.

Yosemite, as the park staff knows, is a place of great biological significance. Two-thirds of the bird and mammal species and almost half the reptile and amphibian species native to California call the Sierra Nevada mountain range home. As your own research site details: "The park supports more than 400 species of vertebrates including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. The high diversity of species is the result of varied habitats across a range of elevations from 1,800 feet to over 13,000 feet. The park's rich habitats range from dense foothill shrublands to conifer forests to high, rocky alpine terrain."

Yosemite provides a critical place of protection for this incredible biodiversity. Approximately forty species in the park are classified as special status under California endangered species legislation, and several are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. And it's not just the plants and animals within Yosemite's borders that benefit from Yosemite's protected spaces. Wildlife needs connectivity to be resilient, and many animal and plant species outside of the park depend on the protected habitat as well as populations within for long-term sustainable health.

Additionally, CHLA also anticipates that local industries including restaurants and markets experienced similar declines in demand as a result of fewer visitors entering the park during this period. This means that guests will likely shift consumption patterns within the park in unpredictable manners. While some guests will be more likely to buy goods in the park, others will carry larger coolers and more food which would increase the risk of negative wildlife encounters, particularly for guests without experience exploring areas with wild animals.

Please do not create bike trails throughout the park. It might be nice to have a bike trail parallel to Tioga Pass, but it adds to the barrier that the road creates for wildlife. I really don't want to see bikes in the high country. It will ruin the majesty and sacredness of this natural place. Manage this park for wildlife, not humans.

## Issues: Cultural Resources

### Tribal / Indigenous Importance

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Commenters encouraged the park to promote the original heritage of Yosemite and Indigenous culture. Commenters emphasized the importance of cultural groups, specifically Tribes whose homeland is Yosemite, , and their ability to recreate in the park. Commenters suggested that the park occasionally give priority access to native people , specifically citing the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation’s campaign for tribal recognition.

#### *Representative Quotes*

Many cultures like to recreate in multigenerational groups- groups that often involve loud music and children. This includes the Miwuk people. We should provide for such activities, as a serene natural experience can easily be found in other areas of the park.

Indigenous Culture - Please promote and encourage Yosemite's original heritage more. Please hire more indigenous rangers. Please hire more indigenous cultural interpreters.

It's been six years since I read this article (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/02/Opinion/sunday/goodbye-yosemite-hello-what.html>), but this part of it has stuck with me: Mr. Leonard preferred to talk about the Southern Sierra Miwuk’s decades-long campaign for tribal recognition by the federal government. The other thing on Mr. Leonard's mind was the traffic. “If you want to figure how to get rid of some of the tourists, I'd be happy about that!” he said. “There's so many people in Yosemite we can't even get there. So we don't care who calls what anything! You can't even find a parking spot!” That may be too much to ask. I would support occasionally closing the park to regular visitors so that native people can have priority access.

### Historic Resources

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Commenters asked the park to be mindful of historic resources when implementing infrastructure changes (e.g., upgrades or modernization of entrance gates) and to maintain the integrity of these historic resources and structures. One commenter specifically cited Wawona as a site for historic preservation and stated that its significance should be highlighted. One commenter requested the park consider keeping the equestrian campgrounds at Bridalveil Creek, Tuolumne Meadows, and Wawona because the use of horses is an integral part of the history of Yosemite, and the ability to bring in private stock to ride and camp is key to preserving that history.

#### *Representative Quotes*

I disagree with reconfiguring the entrance gates. Those are historic resources and removing, moving, or altering them will forever alter their integrity.

This is a broader general statement about the description of current/intended recreational uses for Wawona. The traffic plan refers to the 2014 Scenic River Plan for “Wawona”. Noted is the importance of the hotel(stating it is on the Federal Registry of Historic sites) and associated recreational offerings (swimming, golf) plus riding stables along with the bridge. It seems the Yosemite History Center, which is also a Federally Recognized Historical District, plus several of the historic structures in the District are also of the Federal Register. Seems this area historical preservation should be highlighted as one of the key “recreational” opportunities of this area. Unfortunately, folding its recreational value description solely under the 2014 report findings which had a different focus...protecting the river and surrounding resource only made slight mention of the Pioneer History Center not being impacted by the movement of the public stock campground.. Adjusting the Storybook text would also help clarify this it is something still important for visitors

When considering infrastructure changes, please keep in mind that the National Park system is itself historic. The early NPS structures and infrastructure that was created to allow visitation to the parks should be maintained as a historic resource wherever possible, keeping in mind environmental impacts and undoing any damages previously done, of course.

Please keep the horse campgrounds at Bridalveil Creek, Tuolumne Meadows and Wawona! Horses are an integral part of the history of Yosemite and the ability to bring in private stock to ride and camp is key to preserving a bit of that history.

## Issues: Park Enforcement and Park Staffing

### Enforcement

Commenters requested the park consider the use of stronger enforcement for park rules and regulations including speeding, off-trail behavior, behavior on buses, littering, disturbing wildlife, pet violations, and destruction of property. Commenters' main concern was illegal and out-of-bounds parking. They felt that warnings were not sufficient and requested the park issue hefty fines to mitigate and resolve the issue. One commenter noted that pets can cause safety concerns, and that owners often do not adhere to park rules. Commenters also stated that park rangers should be utilized more efficiently, with more focus on addressing violations rather than managing or directing traffic flows. It was also suggested that parking for housing and lodging should be enforced the same manner as campgrounds.

#### *Representative Quotes*

And there should be actual fines for illegally parked cars. It was frustrating to see all the warning stickers on cars but no actual tickets. There need to be actual tickets issued; word will spread (via Facebook, forums, reddit, etc) that visitors will be ticketed if they park illegally. But with just warning stickers, as is done now, there are zero repercussions for damaging the environment. Visitors see that and then continue to park wherever they want since there are no consequences. Since rangers are already putting in the effort to write up warnings, why not switch to an actual deterrent (aka a real ticket with a fine)?

Increase staff, signage for visitors at waterfall entrance trails about not climbing over slipper rocks and rushing water to get a photo. Add metal pole fencing to keep visitors from going off the trail along with educating visitors about preserving the park, park safety. More trash cans and employees to empty the trash containers daily and often.

Now, instead of seeing wildlife, taking a quiet stroll or a five day hike, quiet contemplation of nature, and enjoying the beauty of unique landscapes with family, visitation has become about "I made it to the top!" get that selfie of me petting a deer, park where we want when we want, More campgrounds, more lodging, more more more. Graffiti on boulders, trash in the meadows, third and fourth parallel trails in the wilderness, pets anywhere you want... and all of these come with an entitled attitude when confronted. The problem with visitor experience in Yosemite: visitors.

I don't have much of a solution to this issue. I don't know how to re-educate people that National Parks are inherently different. They offer something no where else on the planet does. I do have one idea: bring in for a few summers a cadre of Park patrolpersons and seriously, seriously ENFORCE THE LAWS. Too close to the deer? Ticket. Parked outside an established parking lot? Ticket. Dog on the trail? Ticket. Building illegal cairns? Ticket. Consider banning people from the park for serious infractions. I mean it. The NPS has been so visitor-oriented, it's losing it's focus on keeping the place such that it may be enjoyed by future generations. It seems the NPS needs to understand that the visitor will get away with what they can unless they are properly reigned in. It is NOT unreasonable to expect visitors to the Nation's park to behave in a way that allows our descendants to have a decent park experience. Without serious financial punishments and bans from park grounds, visitors will continue to behave horribly and without respect.

Please make it more clear where people can park and where they cannot park. We saw rangers directing people to park on the roadside, which we thought was a no parking zone. Then we got ticketing on the second day for parking in an area we thought was legal, as vehicles seem to be parking anywhere and everywhere so there's no way to base our parking behavior based on other people's awareness of where is a legal place to park.

## Park Staffing

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Commenters noted that addressing understaffing at the park could resolve a number of issues related to safety or traffic and parking concerns. Commenters had mixed opinions on how park rangers should be utilized within the park. Some commenters requested additional staff at gates to direct traffic and parking, while other commenters felt the rangers should primarily be stewards of the park. Commenters generally supported seeing more rangers interacting with visitors, acting as a point of contact for information and guidance. Commenters suggested more staffing be available for facility upkeep and maintenance. Many commenters noted that the overall visitor experience could be improved if the shortage of bus drivers is addressed, and more shuttles are made available. Commenters raised concerns about retention rates, stating that the park should offer higher pay or work with gateway communities to offer more housing as a solution. Commenters suggested the park improve the current “Volunteers in Parks” program and recruit more volunteers from programs such as the Youth Conservation Corps. Furthermore, commenters also encouraged the park to hire staff members who reflect more culturally and racially diverse populations.

### *Representative Quotes*

We should work to have Yosemite staff leadership reflect the culturally and racially diverse population of California residents and Yosemite visitors.

Empower staff rangers too have more latitude in making decisions. Rangers saying “it's out of my area of responsibility” or “that's above my pay grade” should be totally unacceptable when visitor experience and safety are at stake.

Improve the current Volunteer In Park (VIP) program to better support a positive and safe visitor experience. Better trained/qualified and more properly vetted volunteers should be utilized to provide assistance and accurate information to visitors. This would potentially allow park rangers increased time to spend on more pertinent duties and issues.

I don't think there are enough Rangers available in the Valley (or elsewhere), for people to talk to and ask directions and questions. The new so-called Welcome Center is nothing but restrooms and signs. People are confused, and want to talk to a person. Rangers make the experience more personal, and get the visitors more involved in the experience.

No, but way more of your awesome Park Staff is needed. Try partnering with the Youth Conservation Corp added peak season employment. Although you are going to have to build more bunk housing for employees.

The park is woefully understaffed, in all divisions and areas. Essential services are falling apart. Find a way to improve hiring and retention. Higher salaries. More housing. Better housing. More essential amenities for staff, such as internet. Stop penalizing people who want to call Yosemite home, when you take away their housing option because they want to be a permanent employee that is what you are doing. Encourage retention, seek out long-term employees, support, and nurture them instead of driving them away from the park with poor employee policies. A bevy of short term seasonal employees may work for small or remotely located iParks, but not for a huge Park near major metropolitan hubs like Yosemite. Change it.

## Issues: Accessibility and Equitable Access

### Existing Accessibility Issues

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Commenters described accessibility and equitability issues they encountered during their visits to the park. Several commenters discussed ADA-compliant parking within the park, noting that there are too few spaces, that the spaces are difficult to find, or that the spaces are often used by visitors without disabilities. Other commenters noted that the use of shuttles is not a good replacement for ADA parking because shuttles in the park are generally infrequent and do not have the low steps necessary for visitors with limited mobility. Other commenters noted that multiple locations and amenities in the park do not account for wheelchair access, such as the bathrooms and comfort areas. To improve equitable access throughout the park, one commenter suggested the park increase the number of motorized scooters.

#### Representative Quotes

Aside from just too many people in the park, there are also far too few ADA compliant parking spaces. Bikes and walking are not good options for many people with mobility issues, so having available ADA parking spaces throughout the park - close to attractions - is essential.

Increase the number of motorized scooters for rent for persons with mobility issues at the Yosemite Lodge, Ahwahee, Curry Village, and Village Store. One of our family members has mobility issues, and we were able to rent a motorized scooter for a few days, however it would have been extremely helpful if we would have been able to rent the scooter during our entire trip. Without the scooter, our family member was not able to leave the Yosemite Lodge area. In addition, provide a map showing locations to charge the scooter around the valley floor. We had to figure this out on our own, and since we did not know how far the scooter could go on a full charge, ended up running out of battery power mid-journey. This is a very poor experience for someone who has mobility issues.

One thing that can be improved. Are the number of stalls or individual single stall rooms that are closer to current ADA code. Most of the time the two bathrooms at the day care use parking lot in Wawona are sufficient however, the room listed as accessible is far too small and the grab bar is too low. People who use most models of electric wheelchairs also cannot get into the larger accessible Porta potty's because of the significant plastic lip to enter the room so this must be addressed if Porta potty's were to be used as a temporary addition of toilet. If they're also long gate entry lines, continuing into summer 2024 or longer the closest small communities, perhaps in addition to more parking for park and ride situation there should be more toilets and free drinking water near the main roads.

Nowhere have you mentioned access for the handicapped. This is one category that must use their private vehicles to get into and around the park. With an aging population, and one which has the time and money to visit the park out of season, specific strategies such as accessible restrooms, lodging facilities, dining facilities and scenic view turn-outs must be incorporated to insure inclusivity of this protected group. What I see from your descriptions is skewed toward the very young and/or able-bodied, and to first-time visitors who will come and go on a tour bus overnight (like a flock of sheep.) But many of us, who have spent decades in the park, would like a chance to commune with nature, swim a bit, and just relax - - and we may have to do it in a wheelchair or by using a rollator. But we're your regular financial supporters, so make plans to include ALL OF US!

Currently, the facilities at the dam site might check off all legal boxes for accessibility, but in reality, they don't seem adequate. There are wheelchair accessible picnic tables (often sporting bent table planks) near a designated accessible parking site. However, there are no wheelchair accessible stalls at the site's comfort station. One must give up their parking space in order to relocate to the Backpackers' Camp to try and find parking at that site in order to gain access to the accessible restroom there. There is also no designated accessible parking at the dam. I think that accessible facilities at Hetch Hetchy should be integrated with those for the general public. This could be better accomplished if the NPS, in cooperation with SF, used the old bunkhouse and chalet area as a visitor center area. (Both of those buildings are already wheelchair accessible.) There's even room for additional parking.

The meetings emphasis was on social and economic accessibility, which is important but not on handicap accessibility. More handicap parking would be beneficial across from Cook's Meadow near the Yosemite Falls shuttle stop, along the meadow near the Chapel and closer to Yosemite Falls. Shuttles are too infrequent and there are not enough places to sit while waiting for the shuttle. Not everyone can use the shuttle because it is hard to get on an off a crowded shuttle and at times there is no place for a handicapped person to sit. Due to being at high risk for Covid, I am not allowed to ride a shuttle so my only way to get around the valley is by driving and finding parking close by to places I want to go to.

As we have become older, personal mobility has become an issue. Shuttles are generally infrequent, especially from the high country, and do not have the low step necessary to safely enter the bus.

## **Reservation Accessibility**

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Commenters provided several factors that may limit individuals from being able to visit the park if the reservation system was enacted. These factors include internet access, age, disability, wealth inequality, and language barriers.

### Internet Access/Age/Disabilities

Commenters urged the park to ensure that those who may be digitally challenged or limited by a lack of computer access are still reasonably able to plan for a visit to the park and to have a high potential for access when arriving. Commenters noted that the reservation system would disproportionately bar the elderly from entering the park because older age groups often struggle with technology and changing systems. Commenters noted that those with disabilities may struggle with procuring a reservation for similar reasons. Commenters suggested the NPS provide different ways to access the park that would not involve obtaining a reservation beforehand for these individuals, such as “first come-first served” or a “no reservations required” timeframe. One commenter suggested that the park include information on how to access the internet for free at public libraries and other institutions to provide access to the reservation system.

### Wealth Inequality

Commenters noted that those with financial instability may not have access to the internet or a credit card, both of which are needed to make a reservation, and refunds are not provided if the reservation is cancelled, which may deter people from making a reservation in the first place. One commenter requested the park explore how additional fees from reservations may impact low-income populations’ ability to visit the park and should conduct a displacement study to better understand the correlation between fees and how this might impact and/or displace low-income and otherwise marginalized populations. One commenter questioned if the park collected information about visitor demographic changes during reservation periods.

### Language Barriers

One commenter noted that Yosemite is an international destination yet offers no signage in any language other than English. Commenters noted those who do not speak English may not understand park rules and policies. One commenter suggested the park establish promotional strategies that account for a diversity of information channels and media modalities, including offering alert systems in multiple languages. Other commenters emphasized that park communications should be in multiple languages to ensure all visitors have access to information.

## Representative Quotes

During whatever period that the Day-Use Reservation System is in place for the year, we urge the Park to ensure that those without computers or those with limited comfort using the Internet can still have a reasonable opportunity to visit Yosemite Park. That could mean either a certain percentage of Day-Use passes made available at the entrance stations on a first-come, first-served basis each day; or it could include "no reservations required" entries before 7 a.m. or after 3:30 p.m., or it could be based on a different creative recommendation from the VAMP planning process. Social equity should be considered.

The key is to ensure that Disadvantaged Community members or those who may be digitally challenged or limited by a lack of computer access are still reasonably able to plan for a visit to the Park and to have a high potential for access when arriving. The appropriate sharing of Information and transparency will be essential to enabling such Park visitors to accurately know how to obtain day-use passes or to understand the strict time limits for early or late "no reservation" access.

The use of Recreation.gov adds additional fees for use of the site to reserve a permit. We encourage the planning staff to explore how any additional fees may impact low-income populations' ability to climb and visit Yosemite. Planners should conduct a displacement study to better understand the correlation between fees and how this might impact and/or displace low-income and otherwise marginalized populations. We understand that fees can be necessary to protect the lands we all love, and that fees are often necessary for the continued management of specific public lands. However, if Yosemite intends to fully consider—as articulated in the Interior Department's Equity Plan—the justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion ramifications of the fee increases proposed, Yosemite managers must also plan for negative impacts of the increase on marginalized communities.

For those that are in the senior age range, and may not be as familiar with apps and technology, how will they be able to continue to access the park? Are there plans in place that specifically address the senior and accessible communities?

The reservation system as implemented is a terrible idea. It limits park access to some, while ensuring park access to others. It disproportionately impacts lower income, primarily minority, families. It makes Yosemite less diverse and hinders the NPS mission. It ensures that many of the citizens think that Yosemite is not for them.

Comments: Comments: I agree with the need to limit day use with reservations. However I believe certain groups would be at a disadvantage and this would create more barriers for access to Yosemite. Those would include seniors who hold a golden age pass, many have inability to use a computer or even have one. The other group would be the disabled. Please don't create more barriers for them.

The reservation system should include information on how to access the internet for free at public libraries and other institutions. This will help address the "lack of internet access" issue.

Your plans to limit with additional reservation is BIASED and borders on RACIST. It is prejudice against the poor and those without means. As well as favoring those who speak English.

What do I mean?

Require online reservation. The poor are without this. You are assuming all have this access.

You assume and require all have an email address.

You assume and require all to have a credit or debit card.

There is NO WAY AROUND THESE.

The poor to not have the funds to commit in advance. And you require advance payment.

There is No Refund if cancel.

Dedicated, often financially successful, park visitors are able and willing to use the reservation system, so they get to enjoy the park with less visitors. They are the very same people who tend to comment on PEPC. They are also shockingly uniform in income, education, race, and do not represent a cross section of the citizenry of the state of California or the United States in general.

Did you even collect information about visitor demographic changes during reservation periods? Is there anyone advocating for lower income families from Merced who used to be able to come to the park and BBQ on Sentinel Beach? I imagine not. YC donors who spend a disproportionate amount of time with park leadership will say that the reservation system “protects the resource”, and they will trick themselves into thinking that is the goal, when the ultimate goal is to just turn Yosemite Valley into the Country Club they actually want it to be.

The other issue I encountered that diminished visitor experience was the fact that Yosemite is an international destination, yet the park is relying on everyone speaking and reading English to follow the rules. If you walk on any trail or any part of Yosemite, you will hear multi-languages being spoken. Yet- -no signage is in any language other than English.

## Issues: Socioeconomics

### Economic Impacts to Local Hotels, Businesses and Communities

Commenters discussed the socioeconomic impacts of implementing a reservation system on surrounding businesses, particularly nearby hotels. One commenter noted that an example hotel is often booked at 90% occupancy; however, when reservations were needed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the hotel had a reduction in occupancy to 74% on average. In addition to impacts to local hotels, commenters noted that nearby businesses and communities would be impacted due to a drop in visitor spending from fewer visitors coming to the park at one time. One commenter noted that impacts to local businesses from the implementation of a reservation system may be severe enough for litigation. One commenter suggested the park make efforts to promote use of the park during the shoulder seasons to improve local economies. Several commenters requested the park partner with local communities to better balance impacts from the implementation of a reservation system.

#### *Representative Quotes*

To provide additional detail on the impact of summer travel to Oakhurst hotel demand, in a normal peak season, Oakhurst hotels run over 90% occupancy from mid-May through September and generate nearly all of their annual operating profit during this period, but because of the intentionally reduced visitor counts in 2022, market summer occupancy averaged just 74% compared to the typical 90%. If we assume that the 2022 summer's performance is representative of the impact of an ongoing visitor restriction program, then the direct economic damage to area hotels is approaching \$10 million in lost revenue and almost all of their annual operating profit. Severe underperformance during the key summer months has a devastating impact upon the financial viability of many of the hotels and other businesses that rely on the typically heavy flow of summer visitors. Using our hotels as an example of the impact felt by many other businesses, by the end of 2022, our hotels generated enough revenue to barely cover our property operating expenses, and we had significant negative cash flow after debt service. Our results are much improved this summer without a reservation system being in place and park visitation at pre-covid levels.

Personally, I believe that business interests in or near the Park should be part of the solution to this problem. They will ultimately profit from a better visitor experience. Instead I get the impression they are happy with the huge numbers of people from a profits standpoint. Maybe efforts to promote use during the shoulder seasons would help. I believe the Park service has a duty to both preserve the resource, and improve the visitor experience. Even if this means fewer people entering the Park.

Further, the community impact to local businesses may be so severe as to raise the specter of litigation. For example, such a high degree of impact, if this policy is implemented on a permanent basis, may implicate the Takings Clause of the Constitution, for which every severely impacted business would potentially have individual colorable claims to sue for compensation. Additional claims could potentially be brought by parties which have entered into contractual engagements with YNP. Though not every claim would succeed, a range of businesses would potentially have legally valid claims upon which to litigate.

CHLA urges consideration of alternative policies which would avoid this risk.

To be clear, CHLA has no desire and does not intend to bring a legal claim against YNP under these, or any other potentially actionable cause at this time. CHLA raises the potential for these claims out of a mutual interest in ensuring park resources are not avoidably burdened by litigation to the detriment of park visitors. The local hospitality industry's fate is inextricably intertwined with YNP - we want YNP to thrive.

The Economic Generation Report published by the National Parks in 2023 found that most park visitors are now staying outside of the park in hotels such as Tenaya in the gateway communities. The report also states that visitors spent \$24 billion in nearby communities (within a 50-mile radius of parks), which supported 378,400 jobs in tourism and related sectors. The lodging sector saw the highest direct effects, with \$9 billion in economic output, while restaurants received \$4.6 billion in economic output. These statistics make it clear that any changes to park access must keep these visitors - and their deep economic impact - in mind.

I would like to see strategies for ensuring that stakeholders other than the park (NPS) and its visitors do their part to ensure that the park is not overwhelmed. The park brings a lot of visitors to the wider region e.g. towns such as Mariposa, Groveland etc. and businesses in those towns have a vested interest in people visiting. However, I think they also have a responsibility to the guests and their park. I would like to see the park partner with those communities to help them fulfill this responsibility. For example, an accommodation provider in Mariposa, taking bookings for June, could easily inform their guests about the necessity of planning to visit the park. I would like to see strategies for this kind of thing explored.

## **Influence of Local Economy on Park Decisions**

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Several commenters noted that private business profit should not be prioritized over resource degradation and public visitor experience at the park. One commenter stated that businesses would adjust to the changes in visitation caused by a reservation system, and that optimal level of profits for gateway businesses should not drive park management direction.

### ***Representative Quotes***

There has been some concern from local tourism businesses about reducing profit during peak visitor season, but private business profit should not be prioritized over resource degradation and public visitor experience. The parks are owned by all, and a family who drives across the country to visit Yosemite should not have to wait in line for four hours, drive around the Valley looking for parking, see toilet paper and overfilled trash cans on every hike, and lose out on endemic Sierra Nevada species made extinct by environmental degradation, just because a few local businesses are down a few percent profit.

There is currently a strong fear being promoted by some business interests that a VAMP decision based upon a day-use reservation system will result in highly negative economic effects; that requiring reservations for the busy peak season will drive away potential customers; and that limits on vehicles and measures taken to reduce congestion will result in difficulties for lodges, visitor serving businesses, and those who have become accustomed to unrestricted Park visitation.

IN REALITY, THE NPS ECONOMIC REPORT FOR 2022 SHOWS THAT WITH A DAY-USE RESERVATION SYSTEM IN PLACE LAST YEAR, NEARLY 4 MILLION PEOPLE VISITED THE PARK AND VISITORS SPENT NEARLY HALF A BILLION DOLLARS IN GATEWAY REGIONS. REQUIRING RESERVATIONS IN 2022 DID NOT GUT ECONOMIC VIABILITY FOR GATEWAY BUSINESSES NOR DID IT RESULT IN AN OVERALL LOW NUMBER OF PARK VISITORS.

It is our Center's perspective that, in reality, businesses will adjust as they have done in the past when needing

to adapt to floods, wildfires, smoke incidents, government shutdowns, COVID, and other unplanned constraints. Once a final VAMP decision provides full transparency by the Park Service about exactly what is planned, that important knowledge will provide even better opportunities for businesses to prepare, adapt, and adjust. In the end, a Park policy VAMP decision based upon the best management direction for Yosemite in the long run will assuredly result in Yosemite gateway businesses still finding that Yosemite Park is the goose that lays the golden eggs of profits and customers due to the Park's iconic popularity and its inspiring scenic beauty. A goal to assure an optimal level of profits for gateway businesses should not drive Park management direction.

## Planning, Data, and Legal Requirements

### Public Involvement

Commenters found the documentation provided to the public confusing, overly complicated, and too long. Additionally, several commenters noted having issues with broken links provided for the project or losing their comment mid-draft due to issues on the comment site. One commenter noted that they were unable to attend the July public meeting because the link would not work. One commenter suggested the NPS provide plan information at easy-to-remember web addresses (i.e., Yosemiteinput.com) instead of a longer, complex one such as the one provided for this plan.

Furthermore, commenters noted that the July public meeting did not provide enough information to suitably comment. One commenter provided specific information that the park should provide to the public, including a description of the proposed reservation system, the cost of reservations, how the park plans to protect the reservation system against individuals who want to abuse loopholes, and general data on park congestion or wait times.

#### Representative Quotes

If you are looking for public input on these matters it should be easier to find and access these pages. Input pages should have a short, easy to remember address to (Yosemiteinput.com) instead of the long cumbersome hard to print and remember bitly address that showed up in the Union Democrat.

Too little information was provided to make a substantive response. I watched the whole 1.5 hour video of the July public meeting. There was almost no data presented. No one described the proposed reservation system. Do the reservations cost money??? How do you prevent people from making more reservations than they will actually use?? There was no data provided about overcrowding or wait times.

Also, this whole document is too complex for many people. A simpler format for people who are unable to fully comprehend this document might be helpful. I have taught at the University level and some of my graduate students would have found this document ponderous. It is certainly better than not seeking input. Also, hire editors to check this document for spelling and punctuation. (minor criticism) Good luck in your efforts.

Re: July 19, 2023 Virtual Public Meeting for Yosemite's Visitor Access Management Plan

Trying to access this important public hearing failed despite repeated attempts to download app, using your link, or viewing as a web page, or any other means possible as provided in meeting participation instructions..

This is wholly unacceptable to prevent public access to the meeting due to your inferior and inadequate and unprepared set up.

This is an example the message received when following your instructions to participate in this public hearing::

404

Sorry, but that's not a valid link.

It may have been removed, had its name changed, or the address may be incorrect. If you need assistance, please visit the Help Center.

Submitted comments just a few minutes ago and it said site could not be reached. It dumped my comments. This is why I do not like typing into this box only to have it fail. Please allow attachments where I can prepare offline and submit. Then, my work will not be trashed by failure of this system. Please provide a phone number and email address. Failures such as these and questions not answered by prepared materials need to be submitted and responded to.

This comment form is extremely hard to navigate on an android phone. Additionally the links to the survey on the main page aren't working correctly. And the over all layout makes it hard to follow along. Just somethings to consider if you want more people to participate. As you notice the social media pages fill up very quickly with viable comments because the process is way. However the official comment process is not easy. I had to really want to leave comments to participate.

## Consultation and Coordination

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Commenters requested the park consult with various agencies, organizations, and businesses during the creation of this plan. These entities include Yosemite Conservancy in regard to Bridalveil Falls improvements; local tribes to insure native people's interests and concerns are addressed; Disneyland to discuss how they handle high volumes of visitors; and local businesses and politicians to identify new strategies for managing traffic and improving visitor experience. One commenter requested the park convene a listening session specific to commercial operators regarding the plan.

In addition, commenters encouraged coordination with gateway communities to provide additional opportunities for visitors. Commenters recommended utilizing Hazel Green Ranch to provide staff housing, resort lodging, parking, and a fire station. One commenter encouraged partnerships with local hotels and private companies to provide more overnight accommodations (e.g., campsites and lodging). Commenters requested the park coordinate their efforts with specific demographics of people, including youth (i.e., ages 18 and under) and people of color.

One commenter discouraged the use of park facilities and buildings for outside events, such as weddings or business meetings.

### *Representative Quotes*

how Yosemite's first people were involved in developing these proposed strategies  
- if co-leadership partnerships with first people were considered in developing these strategies  
- how youth ages 18 and under were involved in developing these proposed strategies  
- how traditionally excluded persons of color and economically disadvantaged persons were involved in developing these proposed strategies

•We would be extremely appreciative if the park were to convene a listening session specific to commercial operators regarding the proposed visitor access management plan.

As you implement a plan, regularly consult with the local tribal representatives to make sure their interests and concerns are being addressed and pursue co-management where appropriate.

Partnering with local businesses and politicians. Yosemite is located in a very popular tourist destination, and there are many local businesses and politicians who are interested in improving the visitor experience. Partnering with these stakeholders could help to identify new strategies for managing traffic, and could also help to ensure that the strategies are implemented effectively.

Consult Disneyland on how they handle high volumes of visitors?

Hazel Green Ranch is suggesting that the public, the National Park Service, Mariposa County and Stanislaus National Forest would receive the following benefits from the use of Hazel Green Ranch as a privately owned resort:

A. Utilizing Hazel Green private land for 600 cars traffic coming through the Big Oak Flat Entrance to Yosemite without regard to staying at the Resort which will provide one additional parking space per lodging unit in addition.

B. Accommodations for a Park contact station which will oversee the visitor agreement specifying use of the busing service arranged by either YARTS or Hazel Green from Hazel Green to the Valley Floor and return to Hazel Green, thus alleviating significant vehicular traffic in Yosemite, and the constant parking problem in other areas of Yosemite visited by the public.

C. Mariposa County would receive its usual Transient Occupancy Tax and real estate tax projected at in excess of \$3 million annually once the resort was developed. Hazel Green would deliver, upon request, a preliminary letter from the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors indicating the Board's initial approval of this request, and confirming that upon complying with the usual zoning approval requirements for General Plan designation, the Hazel Green offers in this Summary could be approved.

D. Hazel Green would plan for and construct on a portion of Hazel Green 50 units of reasonable market rental apartment housing to be used primarily for permanent employees of the Park Service, alleviating the need for those employees to travel daily to and from rental housing outside of the Park.

E. Hazel Green would be open to discussing other economic benefits which might be beneficial to both Yosemite National Park and Hazel Green. Specifically, at a minimum, all resort units would be limited to occupancy to tenants having life memberships which would eliminate supervising daily Park parking cost including their agreement not to drive further down highway 120.

F. Hazel Green would make overtures to the Stanislaus National Forest to enable its resort visitors to utilize the Forest for typical forest available activities.

G. Hazel Green would create a manned fire station on Hazel Green for constant maintenance of fire safety.

Do not book (prohibit) use of park buildings for business meetings and weddings during peak periods. Groups do not need to meet in Yosemite to talk, wed and do business.

The idea or partnerships with local hotels is great - could that idea be expanded into the nearby National Forest (if not in YNP) to develop additional lodge and camping sites with private companies on BLM lease land to help allow for more over night accommodations within or very close to the YNP.

## Legal Obligations and Previous Plan Requirements

Commenters requested that the park adhere to previously determined visitor use levels, visitor carrying capacity, or “specific and measurable limits on use” as directed through other planning process and/or regulations, such as the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Merced and Tuolumne River Plans, National Trails System Act, and National Parks and Recreation Act. One commenter noted that the visitor use capacities evaluated in the previously mentioned plans were specifically tied to the protection and enhancement of river values and a nondegradation standard and advised that this plan do the same.

## Representative Quotes

ADHERE TO USER CAPACITIES. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires managing agencies to establish visitor use levels within its comprehensive management plans. Prior to the 2014 versions of the plans, the NPS was challenged in court over the perceived idea that the park would allow degradation to occur BEFORE it took management action, and thus ORV conditions had to be tied to impact thresholds. Both the Merced and Tuolumne River Plans established what the District Court called "specific and measurable limits on use." The visitor use capacities evaluated in those plans were specifically tied to the protection and enhancement of river values and a nondegradation standard. Given that the majority of areas in Yosemite prone to experiencing high levels of visitor use are within one of these wild and scenic river corridors, we support the planning team looking to these two pivotal management plans when evaluating any VAMP strategies. Those strategies should all tier from the MRP and TRP, especially the established user capacities. This will be the most effective way to ensure that any management strategies are in keeping with requirements under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Follow your existing (and legally binding) management plans. A decade ago, the NPS adopted the Final Merced River Plan/EIS. This Wild and Scenic River Management Plan already set a very high user capacity limit for "people at one time" in the east end of Yosemite Valley (a user capacity of 18,710 people at one time for Yosemite Valley, with peak visitation estimated at 20,100 visitors per day). Prior to COVID and again this year, the limits set in the Final Merced River Plan have been exceeded even though these limits were set to comply with the non-impairment clause of the Organic Act and to improve the visitor experience in the park.

As directed by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, National Trails System Act, and National Parks and Recreation Act, the National Park Service is required to set a visitor carrying capacity. Because visitors use many areas of the park during their visit, we encourage the park to set an overall visitor carrying capacity and set of desired conditions. We also encourage the park to establish additional scientifically based and peer reviewed indicators, standards, and thresholds for measuring visitor quality and resource conditions in all visitation areas, including the park's wilderness area. The monitoring of these indicators will ensure success and public credibility as the Visitor Access Management Plan is implemented in the future.

Adding more visitors beyond the amount in 1987, when the river was designated to be wild and scenic. There are requirements to maintain the level of service provided when first designated, rather than continue to increase the number of visitors annually well beyond the capacity required to maintain water quality and meet other requirements. My comments are

1. How have you met the requirements for wild and scenic designated rivers both with your plan and in the past?
2. How have these requirements been incorporated, included and addressed in your plan?
3. If not dealt with, how can you plan be implemented given that it is likely to be in conflict with an existing designation?
4. How do the plan goals listed below rank in terms of wild and scenic river designation requirements? What is the priority - meet wild and scenic designation requirements, meet your plan goals, or somehow balance both of them and meet all requirements?
5. Have you been and/or are you breaking the law by not listing or considering wild and scenic river requirements specific to Yosemite and letting the public know about these requirements?

## Impacts, Desired Conditions, and Indicators

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Commenters questioned what impacts the implementation of a reservation system or other proposed strategies would have on the following:

- Surrounding public lands, such as the Stanislaus and Sierra National Forests, due to increased displacement of visitors from Yosemite
- Visitor use and experience due to additional parking locations and changes in traffic
- Animal and plant species, climate change, and other aspects of the environment due to fire, smoke, and elevated numbers of visitors
- Clean air
- Clean water

- Quiet/serenity of the park
- Quality of the visitor experience of the wilderness area
- Viewscapes, due to the potential for additional infrastructure

Commenters requested the park provide details on Desired Conditions and the Indicators that would measure them. For example, one commenter noted that if the park implemented a reasonable air quality target, they should then include a strategy that reduces or eliminates activities or items that could cause degrade air quality past its target.

**Representative Quotes**

|   |
|---|
| <p>All of your strategies should be tied directly to Desired Conditions in as quantitative a method as reasonable. You really have not provided detail on your collective identification of desired conditions or how this will be measured.</p> <p>For example here is one I am afraid your current strategies will miss - badly.</p> <p>I think clean air and water should be near the top of the list of desired conditions. Are you aware of all the hazards related to breathing smoke from fires?</p> <p>If you implemented a reasonable air quality target, and began to measure, you would quickly learn that campfires in the campgrounds in the valley are hazardous to human health. You should include a strategy that reduces or eliminates campfires in the valley. Park policy seems to be stuck in an era of the past when we were collectively unaware of the danger of smoke to human health. You need to move this policy into the present, and base it on best scientific data available.</p> |
| <p>RADIATING IMPACTS. Since our organization supports collaboration with all of the federal river managing agencies along the 122-mile Merced Wild &amp; Scenic River corridor, we are concerned about the potential radiating impacts that the reservation system or other strategies may have on surrounding public lands. The Stanislaus and Sierra National Forests-along with the Bureau of Land Management-do not have the financial resources or staffing to withstand the potential visitor demand that displacement from Yosemite might cause. How will proposed strategies address this potential impact? What data exists to understand the out-of-park impacts on surrounding public lands? How is the NPS collaborating with those federal partners to better understand their unique visitor access management needs? How might nonprofit organizations like ours work with NPS and federal partners to address these potential radiating impacts?</p>  |
| <p>Because YOSE is 94 percent wilderness, the Visitor Access Management Plan must include setting capacity and updating trailhead quotas to ensure the desired resource conditions and the quality of the visitor experience of the wilderness area is protected. This will ensure the park will have overall limits to visitor access limits for this large part of YOSE when it finishes (or "while it is finishing") past wilderness management planning efforts.</p>  |
| <p>In terms of changes to strategies, I would like to see a lot of thought put into potential negative side-effects of those strategies in addition to the positive effects they are intended to have. For example, adding parking, makes it easier for people to park but also means that there will inevitably be more people, and more traffic and so greater impact on the park and the visitor experience. At a certain point this impact outweighs the original intent of the strategy. It seems to me as a frequent visitor, that the park has limited capacity and any strategy to improve the current situation needs to keep this fact in mind.</p>   |
| <p>Nowhere in the plan or options did I see any mention of two of the greatest values of the incredible natural environment that Yosemite provides access to: QUIET and CLEAN/CLEAR AIR. Both of these tremendously healing and restorative properties are eliminated with private vehicles crowding into a space as small as Yosemite Valley in particular, and even along the roadways leading into and through the park. Automobiles have been eliminated entirely within the Mariposa Grove, and while that is a more compact area, it has made it a wonderful place to visit, whereas, navigating the roadways of the Valley, whether on foot, in a shuttle or on a bike, contending with noisy and polluting automobile traffic nullifies the natural experience.</p>   |
| <p>Please provide details related to the stated "Desired Conditions" and indicators that measure them. If air quality is a desired condition, I do not feel any of them will address the problem, until you eliminate campfires in the park.</p>  |

With your plan, how have you considered and addressed all environmental impacts including fire, smoke, recent loss of 20-25% of Monarch Sequoias and other species, climate change, etc. implications associated with elevated number of visitors in the recent past, currently, and future?

## Irregular and Irrelevant Data

Commenters shared concerns over the research and data utilized for decision making. One commenter specifically noted their concern that the Traffic Pilot Study the park conducted is flawed since it was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic when the reservation system was in use; therefore, it does not reflect normal visitation numbers. The commenter further noted that 2023 also cannot be considered a year with normal visitation because the Sentinel Bridge and road was closed and it is the year immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of a reservation system; more visitors may have come to the park this year because of these changes. Other stated reasons that 2023 cannot be considered a normal year include the extended closure of the Highway 120 entrance, the March closure of the entire park due to ongoing flood closures/warnings, historic snows that created intensified waterfalls, the first summer weeks of 2023 being the first without a ticketing system since 2019, the closure of the high country until the end of July, the closure of Glacier Point until mid-July, summer road construction and parking area closures in the Valley, staffing challenges that limiting shuttle services and entry gates, and the dissipation of gate lines in late June after demand surge abated and texting system was implemented. Commenters requested the park conduct a better analysis during a “more usual” year before finalizing plans.

One commenter inquired as to the impact on the Merced and Tuolumne Rivers resulting from of a year without reservations, and encouraged the park to continue evaluating lessons-learned from this process and work toward refining a system for permanent implementation. The commenter requested the park include a “Lessoned Learned” document or chapter during the planning process.

### Representative Quotes

What has been the impact on the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced and Tuolumne Rivers as a result of a year without reservations? We encourage planners to continue evaluating lessons-learned from this process and work toward refining a system for permanent implementation. These kinds of learnings will be important to include within the VAMP as a whole, and we would like to see some kind of LESSONS LEARNED document or chapter created as part of this planning process: What kind of data were you able to glean from the pilot? What worked? What didn't? What was the impact to ORVs? What was the response from gateway communities and visitors? Who was turned away at the gate? What new tools came out of this effort?

#### SUMMER 2023 DATA CAUTIONS

Data from this summer are difficult to use for decision-making given confluence of unusual events.

While issues and anomalies exist every year, this season was exceptional

1. Early summer entry gate lines and Yosemite traffic issues driven by
  - a. 6 weeks closure of Hwy 120 entrance
  - b. March closure of entire Park and ongoing flood closures/warnings
  - c. Historic snows creating epic waterfalls
  - d. First summer weeks without ticketing system since 2019
  - e. High country closed until July 22nd
  - f. Glacier Point closed until mid-July
  - g. Summer road construction and parking area closures in Valley
  - h. Staffing challenges limiting shuttle services, entry gate and other staffing
2. Gate lines dissipated in late June after demand surge abated and texting system was implemented

Visitor access management needs to be tied to visitor experience. It is not just about traffic and the lack of parking, but the overall experience one has when they visit the park.

One of my concerns is the Traffic Pilot Study and the start of its permanent implementation this summer. I feel the study was flawed since it was done during Covid closures and when a reservation system was in use and therefore does not reflect what happens during normal visitation numbers. Even this year is not indicative of the usefulness of the traffic pattern since the Sentinel Bridge and road is closed. We have found that during the pilot study that the rerouting of traffic and pedestrians had led to some dangerous situations between vehicles and pedestrians in the areas of Curry Village, the crossing from Yosemite Lodge and the falls and from the day use parking lot to the Cook's Meadow areas. People were either walking in the road or crossing in multiple places. Traffic still had to come to a halt stopping for people in those areas. The inability to be able to access multiple places in the east valley without having to drive all the way back to the El Cap crossover then head back east impacts both traffic and the shuttle system. The traffic pattern makes me feel like the park is saying "Welcome to Yosemite, now leave."

The period 2020-2022 and even 2023 are not "standard years" for decent analysis. Park resources were heavily impacted by weather, pandemic, construction, personnel turn over. Some information can certainly be gleaned from the crowds and the crowds reaction to changes as well as to the lack of enforcement (especially parking 2023). A better analysis can be conducted before finalizing plans that will bureaucratically impact users for several decades to come. Changes in the use and use patterns do need to be made to preserve the parks assets for future generations lets not neglect the current generation.

## Suggested Alternatives

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One commenter recommended the park consider the following range of alternatives:

1. No Action alternative.
2. "High Sustainable Use - Manage Vehicles" alternative, which aims for a relatively high level of vehicles during the peak season, with some degree of crowding and congestion occurring, but with no potentially significant impacts to natural resources or visitor experience.
3. "Moderate Sustainable Use" alternative, which would ensure that vehicle numbers and overall visitor numbers are managed to stay below levels that may approach undesirable thresholds; visitor-related impacts to natural resources and congestion impacts to visitor experience are both minimal.
4. "Resource Protection - Quality Visitor Experience" alternative, which would emphasize the avoidance of impacts to the park's natural resources and it would aim for a high degree of a positive visitor experience by minimizing the overall number of vehicles in the park or concentrating at iconic destinations.
5. "Shift the Yosemite Experience" alternative, which would intentionally aim to alter visitor use patterns that currently result in visitors driving into the often-congested Yosemite Valley or other busy destinations in the park. Instead, the alternative would plan for short-term, low vehicle number management to be in place for several years with intent to switch to a "Yosemite Vision Strategy" plan that assesses the full range of feasible park management action.

## Representative Quotes

CSERC recommends that the VAMP NEPA analysis include consideration of the following alternatives or similar alternatives developed by planning staff:

- No Action Alternative (the status quo)
- A "High Sustainable Use - Manage Vehicles" Alternative that aims for a relatively high level of vehicles to be allowed within the Park during the peak season, with some degree of crowding and congestion occurring, but with no potentially significant impacts to natural resources nor significant degradation of the visitor experience; While this would provide the highest level of overall use of the action alternatives, CSERC recommends that it clearly be measurably lower in vehicle numbers than the status quo or else there is no purpose in doing a VAMP plan to reduce "unacceptable" traffic and congestion.
- A "Moderate Sustainable Use" Alternative would be designed to ensure that vehicle numbers and overall visitor numbers are managed to stay below levels that may approach undesirable thresholds; that visitor-related impacts to natural resources are minimal; and that crowding or congestion that conflicts with a positive visitor experience are also minimized.
- A "Resource Protection - Quality Visitor Experience" Alternative would emphasize the avoidance of impacts to the Park's natural resources and it would aim for a high degree of a positive visitor experience. It would explicitly aim to minimize the overall number of vehicles traveling within Yosemite Valley or concentrating at other iconic destinations in the Park; This alternative would also have a goal to minimize stress for the Park's or Aramark's staff (and limited staff capacity) given the reality of fluctuating budgets, unplanned for events, etc.
- A "Shift the Yosemite Experience" Alternative would intentionally aim to alter visitor use patterns that currently result in most Park visitors driving into often-congested Yosemite Valley or other busy destinations in the Park. Instead, this Alternative would plan for a short term "Moderately Low Vehicle Number" VAMP management decision to be in place for perhaps 5-8 years with the clear intent that it will be followed by a "Yosemite Vision Strategy" plan that assesses the full range of feasible Park management actions - - from once-discounted options such as a major out-of-Valley parking and shuttle transfer site at Foresta or El Portal, or a significant expansion of Park Service development of alternative destination options in the Park beyond the "main four" destinations, or the evaluation of a range of big picture Park experience options as diverse as the possible consideration of a quiet electric monorail running from outside the Park boundaries or other visionary strategies not yet identified.

## Reservation Systems

### Determining the Number of Reservations

Commenters suggested that the number of reservations available for purchase should be based on the number of parking spaces in the park or the number of booked accommodations in the local area. If the park bases it on parking spots within the park, one commenter suggested the park lower the number of available reservations to be lower than the total parking spot number to allow visitors to find parking spots throughout the park. One commenter requested the park cap reservations for larger vehicles entering the park per day.

### **Representative Quotes**

I like the idea of the reservation system, but something more integrated with the local communities that serve as gateways to the park. I would like to see the reservation sync with local accommodations in the gateway towns and surrounding areas, e.g., a reservation number that coincides with the dates of the stay generated and confirmed by the purveyor of the hotel, vacation rental, hotel, BNB or other accommodation. This could be similar to the reservation provided to those with reservations inside the park (e.g., campground, dinner, classes). The reservation systems of the past were stressful for visitors who have booked accommodations but didn't know whether they would be able to get a reservation or not. I

We think that the most effective way to address this problem is to control the number of vehicles that are allowed to enter the Park during peak summer visitation periods. The number of vehicles should be restricted to the number of parking spaces available.

The reservations should be capped for the number of cars and bigger vehicles entering the park per day.

### **Duration of a Reservation**

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To allow others a chance to obtain a reservation rather than competing with someone who has spent weeks in the park, commenters suggested the park limit the total number of days someone can spend in the park per year if the reservation system is put in place. One commenter suggested the park limit the number of reservations a visitor can have to one per card, phone number, address, or email.

### **Representative Quotes**

Your pass determines your access and guarantees you a parking spot. Limit the number of vehicles/passes to no more than 80 less than total parking spaces per section.

Perhaps there should be a limit on the amount of time or days that you can spend in a year for each person or family. Many will not like that. But in all fairness, if someone has spent 10 or 20 days in Yosemite in a year, how is it fair for someone to get zero. Unfortunately, there's lots of ways to cheat and make reservations under different names but that's just the nature of people. before you make any decisions on such an idea you need to find out how many days, each person or family travels to Yosemite each year with that data. You may be able to make an informed decision on how to change things.

Limit to one reservation per card, phone number, address or email.

### **Cost of a Reservation**

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Some commenters requested the park charge for reservations. Other commenters suggested that the park make the reservations low-cost or free. One commenter suggested the park charge for the reservation, but if a visitor arrives during their allotted arrival window, they receive a partial refund as an incentive to arrive on time. Commenters suggested providing a discount to reservation fees if a visitor watches a "Leave No Trace" or otherwise educational presentation.

### **Representative Quotes**

The parks should encourage families and kids, but I don't think \$30 per adult would be unreasonable and help support an expanded shuttle system. The NPS as a whole and perhaps corporate donors (not sure on this) should chip in for the shuttle system. Kids should be free.

Ideally these reservations should be cost-free, but I realize that the NPS may need to charge a fee to recoup the overcharging by recreation.com.

As for times entry, sometimes plans go array and you can't make it during your allotted window. Maybe charge a nominal fee for the reservations and if you come during your allotted arrival window- maybe get a small partial refund? Or make the reservation fee lower amount if you arrive in off peak hours.

Offer an entrance fee discount for anyone who watches a "Leave No Trace" park specific presentation (or similar) - would be a great way to educate the public on the right way to experience the park.

Cancel 2 week prior to arrival date - No fee, full refund of recreational fee/booking fee, site is available online  
Cancel 48 hours prior to arrival date - No fee, full refund of recreational fee, site is available online  
Cancel less than 48 hours prior to arrival date - \$10 fee, full refund of recreational fee, site is available online  
No Show by checkout time day after arrival - \$20 fee, forfeit all recreational fee, site is available online

## Timed-Entry Reservation Issues

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Commenters questioned how timed-entry reservations would be enforced, and what would occur if a visitor missed their entry window due to circumstances they could not control, such as an emergency or delayed flight. One commenter noted that timed-entry reservation would cause issues for visitors arriving in the afternoon, because visitors who arrived in the morning may not have left the park; parking may be limited for afternoon visitors and the park would be more congested. Another commenter noted that people tend to arrive to timed events early, which would cause issues at entrance stations with timed-entry reservations because there are no waiting or staging areas for visitors who arrive before their entry time. Commenters suggested the park create a waiting or staging areas with amenities for visitors; visitors could wait at these locations until they are notified it is their turn to enter the park.

### *Representative Quotes*

The ticketed entry system used the past three years required travelers to enter the park within a one to three day window that allowed for some realistic flexibility. I don't have experience with a timed entry system but I would guess it would not be uncommon for visitors to arrive at the park entrance outside their prescribed windows. Every time this happens, there will be a delay as entrance station staff explain and enforce. This wastes a lot of time and energy for that visitor, staff, and for everyone waiting in line, engines running.

With regard to the timed entry idea—what will happen to those arriving via airline travel that have flight delays? Will their reservations be held and updated, or will they lose their slots?

Timed entrance is brilliant, but are folks truly going to follow that? You'll need to have enforcement for those trying to slip in early and for those who get stuck in traffic or a long line to the gate and arrive late.

Timed entry seems like a poor idea that would also be difficult to enforce for a few reasons. Firstly, it would require the creation of full and half-day pricing for park use. This, of course, would also mean that people coming for a half day in the afternoon would still need parking and services and there is the high likelihood that people coming early would not have left the park by noon. It creates the same problems in a new way.

I do not believe that a time entry system will work. People tend to come in line up for hours before their timed entry is valid, and that severely impacts traffic at the entrance stations. Currently, there is no staging area at the south entrance, which is, arguably, the busiest entrance in the park. And to the best of my knowledge, there are no staging areas at any other entrances other than people parking off-road.

## Specific Reservation Groups

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Commenters suggested that specific user groups, (i.e., climbers, hikers, visitors outside the Valley) should have their own reservations, which could differ in ways such as fee cost, quota, or timing. Similarly, commenters suggested different reservation types be provided to visitors arriving at the park in different ways. Commenters suggested one reservation type could be provided to those

entering by private car, another type for those entering via shuttle or bus, and another type for those entering by foot or bike.

### **Representative Quotes**

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| <p>You could offer two types of day use reservations - - those that allow you to access the Valley or Tuolumne Meadows in your private vehicle and some that let you enter via a shuttle. Some number of day use visitors could park outside the crowded Valley e.g. at Crane Flat or Badger Pass and take buses/shuttles to the Valley. (In Kauai they require day use reservations to visit the very popular Kee Beach and to hike the beginning of the Na Pali Coast. They offer two types of permits: 1. limited permits for entrance plus parking at the beach, and 2. permits for entrance to the beach but you have to take a shuttle.)</p> |
| <p>Use a reservation system for entry of cars and commercial buses, but allow local and public transport systems and bicyclists to enter without reservations and reduce their fees for entry.</p>   |
| <p>The reservation system implemented during the 2020-2022 years worked well but failed to identify specific user groups: climbers, hikers, visitors to regions of the park outside of the valley, etc. These users should have their own quotas and reservations for use.</p>   |
| <p>I think different user groups could have different types of reservations. For example, climbers and hikers are generally using different parts of the park, and so it doesn't make sense to have them on the same reservation system.</p>   |

## **Other Permit Types**

### **Camping Permits**

Commenters expressed frustration with the existing campsite reservation system. Some commenters requested a more equitable, revised lottery system be utilized for campsite reservations. Other commenters requested more protections be put in place to prevent bots from claiming most campsite reservations as soon as they are made available. Some commenters also requested a more robust cancellation policy for campsite reservations because some sites remain empty despite being reserved.

### **Representative Quotes**

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| <p>Changes must be made to the camping reservation system. It's next to impossible to reserve a valley campsite in the summer, as all campsites disappear within a fraction of a second on reservation day. It seems to require hacking skills in order to get a site!</p>   |
| <p>the reservation system for campsites need to be revamped in some way. As it is now, it is very difficult to reserve a campsite as they disappear the second they are available, let alone get more than 1 next to each other. Also why does the time need to be 7am PST? It seems like it could be a few hours later so West Coasters don't have to wake up so early to reserve a spot.</p> |
| <p>Please fix the camping registration system. It is almost impossible to get a camping spot when logging in on the first available time in the morning for reservations. Is there a way to block bots from making instant, widespread reservations? I don't know this is happening, but I suspect it is.</p>  |
| <p>the camping reservation system is flawed because so many cant get reservations, yet up to 25% of spaces are vacant on any given day. Many more when weather is poor. Please look at better systems to allow cancellations, have a waiting list, and/or a last minute signup so more can utilize the camping sites that exist.</p>   |

## Wilderness Permits

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Commenters requested that wilderness permits be available to retrieve online, rather than in person at a ranger station. Some commenters expressed concern over how a reservation system would interfere with pre-dawn entry and same-day wilderness permits.

### *Representative Quotes*

There should also be a way to electronically pick up your wilderness permit and receive your orientation tutorial online instead of having to go to a ranger station to talk with a Ranger. Often people drive for a few hours to get to Yosemite and then having to stop to talk to a Ranger before your backpacking trip makes it more difficult.

We would like to strongly advocate for Wilderness permits being issued online, at least for CUA holders, as they were in 2020 and 2021. It would help to alleviate congestion, especially in the Yosemite Village area. It would also save time, money, paper, gas and be more environmentally friendly.

Last-minute cancellations and no-shows free up valued wilderness permits that may go unused if interested parties cannot enter the park to visit one of the wilderness centers. With the peak hours reservation system in 2022, it was nearly impossible to make use of such walk-up permits. Since backcountry users contribute very little to traffic and crowding at popular areas, the park should ensure they can still utilize available quota spots despite not having an advance reservation. One strategy would be to make it possible to obtain a walk-up wilderness permit at or near the entrance station or make it possible for the entrance rangers to check on permit availability and only let someone enter to get to the wilderness center if slots are available.

I think there could be significant improvements to the wilderness permit process. My main concerns are that unlike many other national parks, you are not able to pickup your permit offline (and have to be there in person, adding heavy pressure to the Saturday permits due to the fact that the offices close at 4pm on Friday. Even having 1 pickup option around 7-8pm, or required virtual classes/test pre-pickup would greatly increase the possibility of people being able to get into the backcountry on Friday, as opposed to having to wait until Saturday. From a planning standpoint it would also be great to have the trailheads on Rec.gov sorted by area as opposed to alphabetically.

Loss of the ability to pick up same day wilderness reservations, or get the permits that weren't picked up by 11am, effectively cuts off the primary way that I use the park.

It will also result in these wilderness spots being unused since many are not picked up every day.

Please retainin the ability to opportunistically discover new places by continuing to allow same day pre-dawn entry and wilderness permitting.

## Location/Area-Specific Reservations

### Reservations for Specific Park Locations

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Commenters suggested the park require reservations only for certain routes, destinations, or zones, such as Yosemite Valley-only reservations. Commenters noted that restricting access to the entire park when only certain locations have congestion issues would be excessive and inflexible, whereas location-specific reservations would allow park visitors to still be able to experience Yosemite beyond the Valley without a reservation. Locations other than Yosemite Valley that commenters noted as good options for location-specific reservations included the high country, Tuolumne Lake, Tuolumne Meadows, Horsetail Falls, Hetch Hetchy, Tioga Road, and Mariposa Grove. Locations that commenters suggested the park keep reservation-free included Wawona, Glacier Point Road, Crane Flat, Tuolumne, Badger Pass, winter snow play areas, all sequoia groves, and Glacier Point

Road. In contrast, some commenters noted that requiring reservations in specific locations rather than across the entire park could be confusing for visitors and reduce their park experience.

### Representative Quotes

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| <p>On Yosemite's busiest days when morning and early afternoon congestion in East Yosemite Valley is a problem, most of the Park remains uncrowded. Given this, access management in Yosemite should focus on the East Valley and not restrict access to the entire Park. This root problem is best solved by controlling congestion and crowds on busy days in the East Valley with a targeted, dynamic system that addresses key problem areas and times, and which can be adjusted real-time, rather than an inflexible system that limits access to all of Yosemite months in advance.</p> <p>Reservation System</p> |
| <p>It would be ideal if there was a way for summer visitors to reserve a one-day peak-hour pass for just the east end of Yosemite Valley, which would allow non-reservation visitors to explore other areas of the park during peak-hours. Almost like an entrance station to confirm this specific reservation, but within the park and just for the east end of Yosemite Valley (maybe near the El Cap crossover). It would allow park visitors to still experience Yosemite beyond the Valley without a reservation, and allow visitors to enter the east end of the Valley during off-peak hours.</p>                |
| <p>Do not attempt to implement arbitrary limitations on access to certain areas or key attractions as these restrictions will certainly surprise and annoy visitors, reducing their park experience.</p>   |
| <p>Yosemite is a large park, with multiple areas to visit. Some are more congested and crowded than others, and so limiting access to the entire park is unnecessary and counterproductive. Other NPS units have piloted timed entry into heavily congested areas, while leaving access open to other areas, thus dispersing the visitor throughout. In Yosemite, guests should be able to access Wawona, Glacier Point Road, Crane Flat, and Tuolumne freely. Timed or reserved entry should be limited to the East Valley. This would also encourage guests to explore other areas of the park.</p>                    |
| <p>On Yosemite's busiest days when morning and early afternoon congestion in East Yosemite Valley is a problem, most of the Park remains uncrowded. Given this, access management in Yosemite should focus on the East Valley and not restrict access to the entire Park. This root problem is best solved by controlling congestion and crowds on busy days in the East Valley with a targeted, dynamic system that addresses key problem areas and times, and which can be adjusted real-time, rather than an inflexible system that limits access to all of Yosemite months in advance.</p>                           |
| <p>Another idea would be a general reservation for a major route/destination, such as Yosemite Valley (or a section of the valley floor), the Glacier Point Road, or the Tioga Pass Road. For example, we like to stop at various meadows along the Glacier Point Road and are not competing with Yosemite Valley traffic when we do so.</p>   |

## Parking Lot Specific Reservations

### Parking Lot Reservations

Commenters requested that the park require reservations for certain parking lots, such as Yosemite Valley, Yosemite Falls, and Tuolumne. Commenters suggested the implementation of this element only for high-use parking areas, and further suggested the park provide an app that will help navigate visitors to their assigned parking lot. Several commenters specifically noted that if a visitor has a certain park pass (i.e., a reservation for the lodge, wilderness pass, or camping permit), the visitor should automatically get a parking lot reservation. One commenter suggested the park color code parking areas for specific reservations, while another commenter suggested the park provide an early-bird parking lot for those entering the park before reservations are needed.

Commenters noted their opposition to the use of parking lot reservations because they would limit flexibility for visitor plans, force an increase in staff and enforcement due to individuals taking

parking spots that are not assigned to them, incentivize visitors to illegally park and potentially damage the environment from parking off road, and empty parking spots if someone does not show up for their reservation.

**Representative Quotes**

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| I personally do not think that adding reservations for parking lots makes as much sense. This will require people to commit in advance to an itinerary/hiking plan and perhaps not have much flexibility to change it based on weather/other factors. Additionally entering with a reservation for a parking lot and not finding an open space in a particular lot seems like a possible (and very frustrating) failure case. It seems like the staffing burden would be pretty high here to monitor the lots. |
| We do not advocate for parking permits that are specific to destinations, however, if the Park chooses to implement parking passes for specific locations, any wilderness permit for overnight use must include a parking pass for that trailhead when the permit is granted.  |
| Do not enact a reserved parking system - too many visitors are unsure of where they would need to park, and most visitors will want to relocate during their stay. NPS rangers will end up doing nothing but parking patrols.  |
| Prepaid, timed, reserved parking spaces would be useful. Arrive at the designated lot, scan your reservation and proceed to your reserved space. Obviously, this would require restricted access using technology similar to a parking garage. Perhaps you could have an app that even navigates you to your parking space. This would also cut down on people circling around because they are lost.  |
| Reserved Parking As good as that idea sounds, I know from the trial run of that idea a few years ago, it didn't work then. I'm sure there are bugs that could be worked out but I think without dedicated enforcement staff and the threat of towing, that it would be frustrating for visitors and staff. A real potential for unused parking sites because people park somewhere else other than their assigned spot and then no way to cancel to let NPS know the site is available.                        |
| Color code parking areas and where people are allowed to park. For example, campground parking may not park at Yosemite Falls.   |
| Parking at the Yosemite Valley Lodge should be restricted to those with reservations, not day-use parking.   |
| Early bird arrivals, say between 4 AM and 8 AM (during the peak visitation period) should not require a reservation. Designated early bird arrival parking areas should be offered throughout the Valley, good for the day.  |

**Reservation Timing**

**Duration of Reservation, Seasonality, and Trial Period**

Commenters provided varying suggestions for reservation times, including times of day and times of year that reservations should be active. Many commenters requested the park implement reservations during peak visitation days and times, specifically between Memorial Day/May to Labor Day/September and/or between 7 to 9 a.m. to 2 to 5 p.m. Furthermore, commenters requested reservations also be active during holidays and park events. Some commenters suggested reservations for longer periods of time, such as from April to October, all year, starting at 6 a.m. or ending at 10 p.m. Other commenters requested the park only implement reservations over weekends (i.e., Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) and over holidays. Commenters suggested the park begin reservations on a trial period or initially shortened restrictions (weekends only) and determine if further reservation periods (weekdays) are needed. Commenters also requested a variety of reservation lengths, from 1-day passes up to 7-day passes.

One commenter noted that both the season and time frame for reservations needs to be based on current and historic user data, and must be able to adapt and adjust as needed based on ongoing visitor use data and monitoring. Other commenters requested the park consider separate reservation times for different areas in the park to help spread out visitation.

**Representative Quotes**

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| Both the season and time frame that reservations are required need to be based on current and historic user data along with the ability to adapt and adjust as needed based on ongoing visitor use data and monitoring.   |
| The reservation system should also align with peak visitation days and times. For example, while a reservation makes sense for Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, a reservation is less necessary on a Tuesday morning. The reservation system would also be most useful during peak times of the summer such as Memorial Day weekend, Labor Day weekend and other holidays. Additionally, opening the Valley areas at 2 p.m., rather than 4 p.m., would spread out visitation of this highly popular area, allowing for better access.   |
| I think have a permit system for the whole summer is not necessary, and should only potentially be used on the weekends when there is the highest volume of traffic. Only limit visitors on Saturdays and Sundays and Holidays Memorial Day to Labor Day. This would make it available to access during the week for international travelers and everyone that weren't able to get a reservation for a weekend day.   |
| CSERC recommends that the Park begin the VAMP plan with authorization for Park officials to apply the reservation system from April 15 to September 15 each year. If after the first year of formal application of the VAMP plan, the Park staff then determines that the reservation season of use can be modified in the second or subsequent years to a shorter seasonal period (such as three or four months), the NEPA done for the VAMP plan will have analyzed the potential environmental effects of the longer season of reservation use. Each year, the Park staff will have the flexibility to adapt to data from the previous year; and, prior to the holidays in any given year, the Park can determine the selected seasonal time frame for applying an appropriate day-use reservation system in the following year. |
| A critically important feature was an ability to reserve 3 days entry window - without that flexibility the system wouldn't work for my family. I would also like to note that timed entry permit systems like the one currently used at Rocky Mountain NP would cause extreme inconvenience to visitors if implemented in Yosemite, given that getting to the park involves several hours of driving through unpredictable traffic conditions. In my case, the trip can take anywhere between 2.5 and 7 hours (actual times this year).  |
| I would start peak hours at 9a to give an hour for people with wilderness permits a chance to get in after the 8a ranger station open time.   |
| I think that limiting the length of stay to 7 days would allow more individuals to be able to access and enjoy this park, especially at the campgrounds. I would also prefer to see the timed entry permits brought back.   |

**Timed-Entry vs. All-Day Reservations**

Commenters suggested the park consider blocks of time for visitors to enter the park (i.e., a morning and afternoon block, or three to four different blocks such as 7:00 a.m. to 10 a.m., 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.) rather than hourly reservations. One commenter suggested that timed entry reservations have overlapping times (e.g., 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., etc.) to give visitors flexibility and to avoid large clumps of people at the start of every timed entry period. Some commenters suggested a multiple-day entry window because trip plans can change or be delayed.

### Representative Quotes

Summer park reservation system: Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend peak hour (7am-4pm) with 3 timed entry blocks each day (7-10am, 10am-1pm, and 1pm-4pm). Include a way to encourage canceling if needed and making those canceled reservations available for others to use immediately. Offer a 1-day pass, 2-day pass, and 3-day pass. Open reservation calendar in January for that summer season, and then release more reservations 7-days before desired entry date. Cancellations are available immediately.

It also is unfair to lock folks into a 4-hour time window to enter. What if they are delayed by traffic, construction, an accident, or other unforeseen circumstances?

## Reservation System

### How Reservations are Released

Commenters requested the park release a large percentage (70% to 95%) of reservations in advance (several months to one year in advance), and provide the remaining percentage a few days out (three to seven days) or as “first come-first served” passes at the entrance stations.

For the “first come-first served” reservations, some commenters requested the park save a percentage of reservation for release at the entry gates for certain visitors, specifically those who are disadvantaged in obtaining a reservation (i.e., elderly who could not navigate the website, those without online access, individuals who do not speak English, or individuals who could not afford the reservations and/or extra fees associated with online reservations) or visitors who were unaware of the requirement for a reservation to enter the park. Other commenters suggested that the park operate entirely on a "first come-first served" basis, where entrance gates are closed once an established park capacity is met. Visitors arriving at the park after capacity is met would only be permitted to enter as visitors exited the park for the day on a "one in-one out" basis.

### Representative Quotes

Accordingly, we urge that the VAMP plan utilize a wide range of effective strategies to ensure that any Reservation System is fair, easy to use, and makes a portion of reservations available at least six months in advance for international or other distant travelers who plan trips early.

One can imagine a X% of entries per day that can pre-reserved and remaining that can be done at the entry points. However, it would be good to publish the remaining available entries in (near) real time on the park website/app so that visitors can avoid driving out if they feel they dont stand a chance.

Pleas consider 70% of available options to be reserved at least 5 months ahead, just like the current campsite reservation timeline. And the remaining 30% can be available as the first come first reserve options for the same day planners.

The peak hours reservation system should potentially have some exceptions. I worked OT at the gate in 2022 and turned away many Spanish speaking visitors and foreigners who did not understand the reservation system. This was very sad. It would be nice if there was a “walk up quota” that the gate could utilize in such situations without publicizing it as a loophole for all to exploit.

There should be some kind of walk-up option available for those without the technology or skills to book a reservation online or those who spontaneously arrive at the park. This can be a small number of the overall daily quota, but there should be some way for people to come into the park on a first come, first served basis. Otherwise, park visitation will be mostly white, affluent, and old - people who have the sophistication and the time flexibility to take advantage of the reservation system. In terms of equity and inclusiveness, having an alternative to the reservation system will be important. Special outreach and access provisions for under-resourced communities that have not traditionally accessed the park should be an important aspect of the reservation system.

**PROVIDE A PORTION OF ENTRIES WITH "FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED" PASSES**

In order to provide visitor opportunities for those without computers or those who cannot easily otherwise apply for day-use reservations, some portion of the number of vehicles selected as the right number for entry into the Park should be kept available for "first come, first served" Day Use Passes. The passes would be available at the entrance stations until they run out. The number might be 500 or 1,000, but the intent would be to assure that those without options to acquire reservations would have the potential to enter by arriving early to get one of the Day-Use Passes.

## Release Times for Specific Visitor Groups

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Commenters requested the park provide different release times for US citizens compared to foreign visitors. Some commenters suggested a block of reservation days could be made available a year in advance for foreign visitors who require more time to plan, then a shorter release time for citizens. Other commenters suggested the opposite: reservations available a year out for citizens to allow them first choice to visit, while foreign visitors can only acquire reservations half a year out from date of visit.

### *Representative Quotes*

A reservation system featuring several blocks of reservations may be one solution. Instead of making all reservations available during a two-week window prior to travel, a block of reservation days could be made available a year in advance for our foreign visitors with a second block of reservations available six months in advance followed by a third block a month in advance and finally a two-week block with additional openings for daily entry on a first come first served basis. These blocks need only be required during peak visitation times and should encourage visits during off-peak season. The gateway vendors would be able to plan for these visitors and promote other recreation opportunities in the area during the peak season. They may even be rewarded by repeat visitors who have had a far more pleasant experience in the park.

I urge you to establish an advance reservation system seasonally from at least May to October, that will not be just temporary for a year or two. It must be durable and lasting, to give visitors and businesses the clarity and future certainty needed for advance trip planning.

Day use passes would be available up to six months prior to your visit and 5-10% of daily passes will be available 24 hours before entry.

Allow 80% of the reservations to be booked 3 months in advance for anyone not staying in the park. A reservation is good for a 3 day period. Allow the remaining 20% of the reservations to be made 7 days out.

## Reservation Cancellations

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Commenters requested the park address people getting reservations and then cancelling them by providing some sort of incentive or by charging a fee for cancelled reservations. For example, one commenter suggested the park charge a large cancellation fee to dissuade visitors from cancelling, while another commenter suggested that visitors who cancel lose reservation privileges for a certain length of time.

To further address reservation cancellations, commenters requested the park provide a free and easy way to cancel reservations, as well as a way to immediately provide cancelled reservations to visitors that may want to use them. One commenter noted that there was no incentive to cancelling, which blocks visitors who want to enter the park from entering. One commenter further noted that the park should provide vouchers or priority to visitors who lost their reservation due to park closure (i.e., excessive snow or fire).

### **Representative Quotes**

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| I think if there was some way to recycle dropped/canceled reservations to make them available to others, that would help increase others chances of getting a permit into the park.  |
| For the reservation system, please work closely with recreation.gov to figure out cancellations. So many times I do not cancel because there is no advantage to doing so. There needs to be an incentive, even for last minute cancellations. You need to work on strategies to make reservations easy and the system inclusive. |
| Reservation system for day use visitors as well. Use the Disneyland Pass holder rules. If you have a reservation and you don't cancel it and are just a no show twice, you lose reservation privileges for 3 months.   |
| Reservation system (may be lottery just like Mount Whitney to be fair). Charge an expensive fee (\$500) if one no show with their reservations.  |
| In addition to daily reservations, a 24 hours in advance last-minute pop-up window if there are cancelations or unexpected openings. Additionally, reservation vouchers/priority if your reservation is canceled by NPS (e.g., when the park is closed due to excessive snow or fire).   |
| Allow *free and easy* cancellation of daily entry, parking, and camping so that others may enjoy their spot.   |

## **Abuse of the Online Reservation System**

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Commenters noted that robots (i.e., “bots”) currently take large portions of camping reservations and would do the same for park reservations unless the NPS or recreation.gov actively prevented the abuse of the system. Commenters noted that this issue particularly affects elderly visitors and visitors who are unable to access the website when the reservations are released due to internet issues or schedule. One commenter suggested the site include the usual “I am not a robot” button to lessen the issue of bots obtaining reservations.

Additionally, commenters were opposed to the NPS using recreation.gov for reservations in general, because it is a private company that charges additional fees. Commenters provided suggestions regarding the website, from discontinuing its use for a new website directly from NPS to modernizing the site/technology to accommodate more users and improve user experience.

### **Representative Quotes**

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| Also, I'm told that recreation.gov is not a government business (and their politics are not in alignment with mine) so a private company is making profits on people paying to visit their public lands. The park should take over its own reservation system and use the profits for infrastructure. Most people don't know that it is not a park service system.   |
| The reservation system is so hard now. I can't compete with computer programs to get a site. I don't know why you can't just insert a "I am not a robot" button. California parks has it. I know you piloted the north pines lottery but that is just more money to try for a site and you might not get one. The prices of the campground per night has already gone up substantially in the past 4 years. I don't understand all the behind the scene programming for reservations but I feel like it is not a hard fix to not let computers win the reservations. |

That being said, if this is going to be something handled through recreation.gov, that website needs a total overhaul and the use of bots needs to be eliminated. The people who can use bots creates an unfair advantage for access. That needs to be addressed prior to implementing any kind of reservation permits needed.

I think the main thing for me is making sure the use of bots in recreation.gov is addressed so people who are trying to obtain a day use permit is fair. It's already a major issue with campgrounds and it's only going to flow over to day use permits too. There's plenty of evidence online of people using the bots, despite what recreation.gov says on their website.

As a recommendation, making sure that reservations for opened in a phased time frame so reservations aren't immediately sold out.

The website used to make Park reservations (www.recreation.gov) often experienced technical difficulties when the prior reservation systems were in place. For example, users reported that the system "locked up" due to the volume of users, so that by the time access to the website was available, reservations were unavailable.

Strategies and Solutions to Minimize Impacts:

- If a reservation system is adopted, modernize the website/information technology to accommodate more users and improve user experience.

## Number of Cars in the Park vs. Number of People in the Park

Commenters noted that the park should not only consider the number of cars entering the park, but should account for the number of individual visitors in each car. One commenter questioned how the park would count the number of people (not vehicles) who enter the Merced River corridor to ensure compliance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement, and also questioned how the user capacity numbers for the park were calculated.

### *Representative Quotes*

How does the park propose to count the number of people (not vehicles) who enter the Merced River corridor to ensure compliance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement?

Another related question that I asked when I was a park employee relates to who is counted per the terms of the Settlement Agreement. I asked twice and received different responses from informed NPS authorities. The answer is important to the development of a Visitor Access Management Plan.

My question was, and remains, "Are park employees (or dependents) who are in the Merced River corridor in Yosemite Valley counted against the maximum numbers stipulated in the Settlement Agreement?"

This is important because the visiting public would be affected by either interpretation. If the real answer is, "Yes," that Park might attempt to manage with the bare minimum number of employees to permit the maximum number of visitors to be in the river corridor.

If the answer is, "No," the Park might seek to hire a higher number of employees to offer the best level of service possible.

Taken to the most literal interpretation of the "Yes" response, employees on duty at their work site - and unlikely to be posing a negative effect of park resources while at the same time, would be likely to make a positive contribution to visitor services.

The correct answer to this question is significant because during a typical peak season day, there could be more than 1,500 people working in the Valley.

It is important that the NPS explain to the public how the terms of the Settlement Agreement were established. Of particular importance to the visiting public is how the user capacity numbers were calculated. I was working at the park on the Merced River Planning Team for many years. The calculations used to establish the maximum number of people permitted in the Merced River corridor at any one time and/or in a 24-hour period are, frankly, a mystery to me. I am sure that many others are interested in this calculation, especially because it does impose limitations on visitor activities - seemingly to perpetuity.

Like with restaurants and airline reservations, the number of visitors (per vehicle in this case) should be addressed.

## Type of Reservation System

Commenters discussed the type of reservation system the park should use, as well as the type or reservation categories that could be considered. Commenters requested the park use a lottery system for their reservation system. Commenters noted that a lottery system would be fairer because it cannot be gamed by logging early on recreation.gov or through other privilege. One commenter suggested that the reservation system should track the number of failed reservation attempts per visitor, and award priority points each time to increase the likelihood of that visitor securing a reservation in the future. Another commenter suggested limiting the number of reservations that an individual can win over a period of time in an effort to ensure everyone has a chance to visit the park.

Commenters requested the park implement reservations for a minimum term (i.e., 5 years) as a trial period to fairly assess impacts of the system on the park.

### Representative Quotes

If restricting visitation is the choice, I think it should be implemented in a way that does not favor the privileged and entitled, which may look like limiting the number of reservations per individual per year, or a lottery.

Tickets should be available 6 months prior and, via a lottery, 2 weeks prior. It's important that the 2 weeks prior reservations should be done via lottery. The whole system of logging early on recreation.gov is flawed and biased. The lottery is the only fair system that doesn't require one to be connected via high speed at 7am, no matter how busy they are.

Set aside some entry tickets for lottery since reservation system privileges those in the know and with ability to game the system.

Limit the number of unique visits visitors can use over a period of time.

I feel that a reservation system combined with a priority system that uses points accumulated when you are unable to successfully acquire a slot for the year or for the season that year. Some thing along the lines of if you tried and were unable to acquire a slot, you gain points capped to a certain point. Those points can help you gain priority for subsequent years queues until you are able to successfully get a slot for the year. The points would then reset and start from zero after a successful reservation. There would have to be research about the average wait time in years for a guaranteed slot and possible abuse of the system to insure it would work. This type of system would also be viable for camping reservations.

## Exemptions/Special Passes from Reservations

### Local Exemption from Reservations

Commenters requested that the park exempt locals from reservation requirements. Some commenters defined "locals" as residents of the state, while others defined them as residents within a

certain mileage of the park, in certain nearby counties, or in a certain zip code. Commenters stated that the park could determine a visitor’s local status through the zip code on their identification card. Furthermore, commenters suggested several ways to facilitate local visitors without requiring a reservation, including 1) implementing “locals only” days or weekends, 2) providing a “locals park sticker” with a certain number of free days, 3) creating a yearly pass only sold to locals, and 4) retaining a certain number of reservations for local residents only. Some commenters felt that local residents should not get special treatment regarding reservations, and should be required to plan just like any other visitor. Commenters noted that state parks have programs that benefit locals; therefore, the park could do the same.

**Representative Quotes**

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| <p>However, I believe locals of California and specifically in the Central Valley area, Merced, Mariposa, Fresno, Kings, and Tulare Counties should be able to show identification of living in the area to be able to get in the park. As someone living in Kings county, it's so upsetting to hear about my friends turning around and not being able to go in the park because of 5 hour+ wait times when this is our home. Reservation system with exceptions for locals.</p>  |
| <p>I would prefer to see specifics for how to welcome local populations. I grew up on the eastern Sierras and enjoyed taking day trips off of Tioga Road. The problem with a reservation system is that it often precludes locals being able to drive up and enjoy just a few hours in the park. Given that locals are usually not the visitors that create problems within the park such as not following parking restrictions, littering, etc, it would be nice if they were given special access. Perhaps a special pass, with a certain number of "free" days that they may enter without a reservation. I think if something similar to ca tolls fast pass was used for locals, they could avoid adding to waiting traffic, as well as allowing staff to focus on out of the area visitors.</p> |
| <p>Easier access for locals to use the park without having to make a reservation. Occasionally, we would just like to be spontaneous and spend the day on a trail. The local impact would be negligible on any given day. The parameters could be zip code driven and verified by identification.</p>  |
| <p>most importantly give American Citizens priority access to the reservations as is currently done in several states for state parks in which those states open reservations first to state residents for a period of time before allowing non residents to make reservations. A major part of the over crowding at all of our National Parks is due to visitors from outside of the US.</p>  |
| <p>Local residents should not get priority entry. Everyone needs to plan ahead. Like many events and attractions spontaneous visits are just not possible anymore. This is a "National" Park after all. In addition, this could be abused very easily. How would "local" be defined?</p>   |
| <p>I think bringing back a version of the reservation system will be paramount to the preservation of Yosemite, but I also believe that this type of system disproportionately negatively impacts local California residents who make a last minute plan to go to Yosemite for the weekend. I think there should be a specific amount of permits reserved for citizens/residents of California, especially those that live within a 3-4 hour radius of the park. Valid identification should be required to create a reservation to help avoid people lying about being a resident of California.</p>  |

**Exemptions for Visitors Staying in Local Hotels Outside the Park**

Commenters suggested that visitors with confirmed lodging reservations in gateway communities should have guaranteed entrance into the park. One commenter suggested the park provide surrounding lodges reservations for their guests. Another commenter suggested visitors bring their invoice from the hotel to the gate in place of a reservation. Commenters expressed that needing to obtain both a lodging and park reservation was convoluted. One commenter provided a contrasting view, stating that too much consideration is given to hotels outside the park, and that their guests should obtain reservations in the same fashion as any visitor.

### Representative Quotes

- Given that 72% of guests now stay outside the park, according to the Economic Generation Report published by NPS in 2023, it is crucial that those visitors staying in the gateway communities are considered when implementing a reservation system. Not only have businesses such as Delaware North invested in the local community, but their guests contribute to the local tourism economy and deserve the best experience. Tickets should be allocated to guests staying in the gateway community hotels, including Tenaya at Yosemite.
- Alternatively, guests with confirmed lodging within the mountain gateway should be able to enter the park without a reservation.

One possible idea is to provide a limited number of reservations to the accommodations in the surrounding communities for their guests so a Yosemite reservation is part of their stay instead of requiring them to obtain both a lodging and Yosemite reservation.

If considering a reservation system, include a count of the Gateway Partnership hotel rooms. Allow the visitors staying in the outlying hotels to present an invoice from their hotel but warn the hotels that is not an admission pass as they still have to pay the appropriate gate fees.

The only thing I want to add is if you do go back to a reservation system I think too much consideration is given to hotels outside the park. It is not the job of the NPS to make sure these enterprises are successful by giving them special passes/reservations so their guests can get into the park. They should go into the reservation pool with the rest of us.

#### Local Lodging Partners

Work out some sort of compensatory arrangement with local lodging providers to enable their guests to access peak season and peak hours permits if a reservation system is enacted. It seems that lodging providers specifically in the gateway communities for the park are the major opposing force to a peak season reservation system. Work with them, find a compromise, develop a solution that meets the needs of both sides. Perhaps each lodging provider could be allocated a certain number of permits each week based on the number of rooms they have. They should have to show that they are making an effort to communicate to their upcoming guests about the need for a reservation, so that as many guests as possible obtain a permit on their own. The allocation of special use permit would be limited, so that this would happen. But they could use that allocation of special permits for those guests who were truly unable to obtain a reservation. Gateway communities should include Coarsegold, Oakhurst, and Fishcamp; Cathy Valley, Mariposa, and El Portal; Sonora, Big Oak Flat, and Groveland.

### Exemptions for Visitors with Other Park Pass Type

Commenters requested the park exempt visitors who have already obtained other park permits, reservations, or lodging confirmation. Other park permits would include wilderness permits, backpacking permits, and camping reservations. One commenter specifically requested those seeking to obtain a backpacking permit be exempt because a reservation system renders it impossible to obtain a walk-up back-country permit since prospective visitors cannot visit the ranger station to assess availabilities. Commenters voiced their concern that visitors may abuse the system by purchasing other, easier-to-obtain permit or reservation types in order to get a free park reservation. In addition, one commenter noted that visitors without season passes should be able to access Badger Pass without a reservation, even during days on the firefall event.

### Representative Quotes

Wilderness permit holders should not be lumped into more restrictive regulations that day visitors may face. The preservation of the wilderness experience should not be impeded by issues created by day visitors. In various experiences day visiting, camping, and wilderness backpacking, backpackers often have the ideal strategy of park once for the duration of their visit and use foot or shuttle for transport. However, to prevent individuals from getting a wilderness permit to evade restrictions without intent of actually using the permit, recommend a system to prevent abuse.

Comments: The problem with the daily reservation system is that it renders it impossible to obtain a walk-up back-country permit. I would love to see a solution to this issue. One idea would be to empower booth rangers to grant a temporary entrance (valid for one hour), so prospective back-country hikers could visit the ranger station to assess availabilities.

Have daily reservation limits during peak days. You can be exempt from the limit if you have an overnight hotel/campground reservation, or a reservation to hike half dome.

Somehow, non season pass holders need to be able to access Badger Pass on days that reservations are required due to Firefall. Guests entering the south gate, but not the valley should be able to ski. Badger Pass needs our support.

visitors with lodging reservations inside the park should have an entry included with that reservation by default so that they do not need to coordinate two separate bookings.

## Exemptions for Drive-Throughs

Commenters shared their concern regarding the impact of reservations on the ability to drive through the park via Tioga Road/Highway 120. Commenters noted that the ability to pass through the park via that road substantially decreases their overall drive time and allows them to avoid more dangerous roads with narrower lanes and steep grades. Commenters suggested the park exempt drivers who intend to pass through the park, or provide a “pass-through” permit for those who live in gateway communities or are re-entering the park. The park can provide sufficient time for the car to pass through the park and require some sort of indicator that the car has passed though and left the park. For example, one commenter suggested vehicles with “pass-through” permit would have 90 minutes from the time of entry to exit the park, and a colored windshield sticker with the hand-written time indicating "pass-through" status.

### Representative Quotes

You may not consider the Tioga Road as a link in our regional highway network, but when it is open, it allows local and other through drivers to avoid the very nasty Hwy108/Sonora Pass and Hwy 4/Ebbett's Pass for travel over the central Sierra. These other routes have grades in excess of 20% and are just over single lane in places. They can be very hazardous and even deadly for RV drivers and all others. I know that Tioga Road isn't really part of State Hwy 120, but most local TV, radio and news outlets usually refer to it as such.

I think provision should always be provided for traffic that needs to take Highway 120 to access Nevada. Just crossing the Park on the highway would have no practical impact on the Plan. To make sure the traffic does indeed pass through some type of form could be presented to the opposite entry station. I live in Tuolumne County and being denied this ability has cost me a MUCH longer trip.

Please remember that the Tioga Pass Road is a vital connection during summer months between communities such as Mammoth Lakes and central Calif and the Bay Area. In order to control day use population in the Park, you might consider a timed entry pass that allows sufficient time to pass through the Park but not excess time to allow other than short stop use of park facilities. And please make the hours of available use something reasonable ( ie not before 6 am or times that cannot be met without driving in the middle of the night.

When Tioga Road is open, vehicles should be able to obtain a "pass-through" permit. Those vehicles would have 90 minutes from the time of entry to exit the park at either the Tioga Pass Entrance (if traveling west to east) or Big Oak Flat Entrance (if traveling east to west). The colored windshield stickers with the hand-written time indicating "pass-through" status seemed to work well when this was instituted in the past.

## Interest Group and Business Exemptions

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Commenters suggested varying interest groups, businesses, and visitor types be exempt from reservations. Commenters suggested visitors taking alternate transportation (i.e., walking, biking, busing/shuttling, motorcycling, carpooling, etc.) into the park should be exempt from requiring a reservation or entry fee. Commenters further noted that specific groups of people should be exempt from requiring a reservation, including disabled individuals, military personnel, and Native Americans. One commenter suggested that the park give to visitors that have visited other National Parks or are working on their “bucket list.” Other commenters suggested the park exempt non-profit groups, park or Aramark employees, Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) holders, and tour companies.

### Representative Quotes

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| NO RESERVATION REQUIRED FOR PARK/ARAMARK EMPLOYEES AND INHOLDERS<br>Reservations would obviously not be required for Park employees or Aramark employees or for those with inholdings within the Park. (Passes will be provided.)   |
| Also, there needs to be a designation for long term, local and a process to allow certain qualifying frequent visitors on a long term permit, such as neighboring community, climbers, artists, photographers, contributors to the park in general.   |
| 1) Reservation System: Since we include sight visits with our itineraries and brochures, restricted access via a last-minute booking system does not work. Our customers rely on us to provide services as promised. As such motorcoaches should be exempt from this system or have a separate permit system. Folding group visits in with daily reservations will be counter-productive for Yosemite and not address traffic management issues.  |
| Native peoples should not be required to reserve entry to their ancestral lands. No reservations should be required   |
| Give priority to those that have already made an investment in the National park system. Consider giving priority to those that have visited other National Parks and are working on their bucket list.   |
| As part of a reservation system, full vehicles (4 or more) should Not require a reservation. Vehicles that seat only 2-3 people, even though full, would still require a reservation. This policy is intended to produce fewer vehicles in the valley parking lots.   |
| I support requiring reservations for park entrance for the general public. However, I believe those who have a military or disability access pass should be exempt from needing a reservation.  |
| I strongly support exempting motorcycles from any reservations system. Please recognize that traveling by motorcycle is far different than by car. Unlike a four wheeled vehicle, motorcyclists cannot safely make up miles by driving into the night if we suffer a delay on our way to Yosemite. In addition, motorcyclists are more vulnerable to weather conditions, which makes timing arrival on a certain date(s) very difficult. Finally, motorcycles are a relatively small portion of overall visitors to Yosemite. Our vehicles consume less space than cars / SUVs. Exempting motorcycles from any reservations policy would be sound public policy with little impact on the overall strategy, but a huge benefit to the motorcycling community. |
| allow anyone using public transportation into the park to enter without a reservation. That would obviously require increasing the transit options, but it would cut down on traffic in the park, benefit businesses in gateway communities, and make the existing roadways a lot safer and more accessible for emergency vehicles.   |

## Arch Rock Entrance Station Upgrade and Modernization

### Suggestions for Arch Rock Entrance Station

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Commenters requested that the relocation and modernization of the Arch Rock entrance station include wider lanes and additional kiosks. Many commenters encouraged relocating the entrance to the park boundary in El Portal, while one commenter suggested the Cascades area instead. Commenters suggested elements to modernize the station to allow for quicker entry, such as utilizing technology to create an unmanned pre-paid pass lane.

#### Representative Quotes

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| Even with a reservation, I have experienced slowdowns at the arch rock entrance station due to visitors taking time to ask questions to the ranger at the station. Having more stations at the entrance would help with this problem but having modern, unmanned stations would speed up the process even more. The park could have visitors scan a prepaid pass to allow for quicker entrance especially for those visitors who don't need information or maps. To coincide with the unmanned stations, there could be information stations where a ranger or two could be stationed for those who do have questions. |
| I support relocating the Arch Rock entrance to an area that is wider and able to accommodate more vehicles. That would reduce the complexity of daily lane changes to allow two lines of cars to enter. The Cascades area might be the best location because the floor of the canyon is wider there, there is already a vault toilet, a picnic area and a parking lot.   |
| If arch rock, or other entrance stations, are not positioned to get internet (so that technology can be utilized to eliminate entrance lines) or allow employees to use an employee lane (not just after waiting 1-2 hours to approach the last 100 feet where the lane is), move the entrance station(s).   |
| I recommend moving the Arch Rock entrance gate to the park line in El Portal. The Mariposa Gazette stated that NPS does not own this part of the road. Certainly something can be worked out between Cal Trans and the National Park Service. There needs to be different entrance kiosks for different purposes: employees and residents need their own kiosk, visitors with access passes need another kiosk, pre-paid electronic entry should have another kiosk etc. No questions should be answered at the gates-make a separate area for visitor questions or send people to the visitors center for Q/As.       |
| Arch Rock Entrance -<br>1. Moving back to El Portal would expand space for more kiosks, staff not in the road or standing outside in the weather, would provide options for user Self Help locations and access to restrooms. While I have passion for the historical location today's users are not as sufficient in outdoors general awareness or self help  |

## Tioga Pass Entrance Upgrade and Modernization

### Relocation and Reconfiguration

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Some commenters suggested reconfiguring the Tioga Pass entrance to allow for extra lanes. Other commenters supported relocating the gate outside of the park boundary entirely. One commenter expressed strong opposition for expansion, stating that it would change the overall quality of the experience for Tioga Pass.

#### Representative Quotes

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| Finally I agree that some modification of the Tioga Pass entrance station is in order. The NPS folks up there have been doing a heroic job of managing traffic by sending those of us with passes through the exit lane when possible... but if there were a lane where we could just flash our passes or even an automated scan entry that would relieve a lot of congestion at the Pass. |
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YES: Relocate or reconfigure Tioga Pass entrance to improve flows through this entrance station. BUT IT MUST BE outside the boundary of the Park on the Inyo NF side of the Park.

If a reservation system is instituted, a little more staffing and possibly a second lane with a booth at the Tioga entry could make things move much faster. Might be cheaper and friendlier than a license plate reading system.

the essential quality of the Tioga Road entrance station and surrounding area is remoteness and quiet. Expanding capacity at that station would profoundly change the quality of experience of the area, and I STRONGLY oppose it. Staggered, timed reservations for entry would be preferable to alleviate congestion while retaining the sublime experience of the area. Please do not destroy the unique wild nature of the high country by building out; you will kill what you hope to save.

## Entrance Stations – General

### Improvement for Congestion at Entrance Stations

Commenters provided suggestions on how to improve wait times and congestion at entrance stations. Suggestions included:

- Installing more kiosks
- Contactless entry through the use of transponders, such as with FasTrak
- Prepaid passes
- Park staff stops answering questions; visitors can direct questions to visitor centers
- License plate readers
- Express Lane(s) for permit holders, those with reservations, returning visitors, CUAs, employees, and/or visitors with hotel reservations
- Phone passes or passes through the park app visitors can show or scan for quicker entry
- Rearrange entrance kiosks in series, such as at gas stations
- Park rangers to move down the line with handheld devices rather than cars coming to kiosks.
- Keep credit cards from commercial use authorization holders on file to eliminate the need for credit card reads with daily visits.
- Create carpooling incentives, such as reduced fees or reserved parking spots, to reduce vehicle congestion at gates and in the park

In contrast, commenters noted that any improvements to entrance stations or lanes would not alleviate congestion because the main problem is the number of visitors and cars trying to enter the park; commenters noted that the only way improvements to entrance stations would lessen congestion is if the changes are enacted with other plan elements, such as restricting the number of cars allowed in the park at once. Additionally, some commenters felt that any contactless improvements to entrance stations would impact visitor experience, because interacting with the park rangers at the entrance stations is part of the park experience. One commenter noted that existing Lifetime Passes do not have the capability to be scanned by electronic readers.

#### *Representative Quotes*

For those who will still drive their own cars into the park, improved entry (contactless/FasTrak style entry based on transponders?) are the key elements.

I don't believe contactless entry is a good idea. If people get in faster, it will be even more crowded. People like talking to rangers. Entrance gate people in uniform aren't interpretive rangers, but they still are part of the experience.

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| <p>Additionally, you should investigate streamlining entrances into the park. This can include -paying an entrance fee at the time of making a reservation or providing proof of an annual pass. to expedite the time at the entrance station. Also rangers should refrain from answering questions - they can just direct visitors to the big oak flat visitor center.</p>  |
| <p>Keep the credit cards of commercial CUAs on file, thereby eliminating the need to run credit cards with each daily entrance.</p>  |
| <p>At entrances install stations in series, similar to gasoline pumps at service stations. This strategy obviously works and potentially will double or triple the flow of cars without needing to increase entrance width.</p>  |
| <p>Have a separate line for people with verifiable reservations for motel, lodge, campgrounds, hiking, back country, etc with paper turn in since phones are being cloned and hacked now days. Similar to the diamond carpool lane when you get close enough to entrance.</p>  |
| <p>I'm not sure about the park entrance updates; that should be improved if it were enable a better management experience for the park staff. The contactless entry seems like it would be sensible for efficiency and to reduce contact under pandemic conditions, but I like meeting the park rangers and feel they give a personal introduction to the national park and are an important reminder as you enter the park, to be greeted and reminded that you're in a different and special place.</p>  |
| <p>I think reconfiguring entrance stations to allow people with annual or Senior passes to have expedited entry would be helpful, and having some type of contactless electronic RFID tag/reader system might also help with passes and reservations.</p>  |
| <p>Finally, at certain times, one entrance kiosk should be delineated for only people who have park passes so those vehicles can show their pass and be waved through. While having an electronic reader for passes sounds like an interesting idea, there are way too many people with Lifetime passes that were issued years ago and so would not contain a chip. Also, with an electronic chip there is no way to check the ID of the person with the pass so people would not have to prove they are the passholder to obtain park entrance, which would lead to abuse of the system and a loss of park revenue.</p> |

## Entrance Station Infrastructure

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Several commenters suggested the park consider creating or installing certain infrastructure before the entrance stations that would help alleviate entrance station congestion and negative visitor experience, including:

- Installation of signs that provide information regarding the need for a reservation
- Installation of Bluetooth stations that provide visitors with park history and information about that particular area while they are waiting in line
- Locating suitable locations to act as visitor centers before the park entrances so that visitors can familiarize themselves with the park and pricing ahead of the kiosk.

### Representative Quotes

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| <p>To improve the visitor experience on the way to park entrances, Bluetooth stations could be set up at intervals with park history and information about that particular area ("To your left you can see the original road before a rockslide took out that section in ___ year." eg.). Visitors could connect to these stations with their devices for an audio tour without the need to hand out headsets.</p>   |
| <p>One important area to focus on is informing visitors that they will need an additional permit for entry, as there was significant time wasted in 2021 and 2022 by entrance gate staff talking to visitors without reservations. I recommend adding additional signage well before visitors get close to the Park entrance that provides information and resources so people can learn more without creating an unnecessary line at the entrance gate.</p> |

Upgrade and Modernize Entrance Stations: Where/if possible, locate "enticing NPS visitor centers" before the park entrances so that visitors can familiarize themselves with the park and perhaps have the option of paying entrance fees, etc. ahead of the kiosk. Buying books and souvenirs (and maybe a snack) on their way in and out might be a good alternative to making those stops in Yosemite Valley.

## New or Relocated Entrance Stations

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Commenters suggested the park create or relocate entrance stations, which includes adding an entrance station near Bridalveil Fall to allow vehicles with reservations to enter the valley more easily, establishing a valley-only entrance point at Southside Drive, or moving the current entrance stations to the park boundaries rather than having them well within the park. One commenter noted that the park made an oversight by not providing any information on the southern entrance in the plan because that entrance has similar line and congestion issues as the other entrance stations. One commenter felt that four entrances to the park was suitable and that no new entrances should be considered.

### Representative Quotes

Add an Entrance Station and traffic pattern near Bridal Veil Falls that only allows vehicles with reservations or lodging guests to enter the valley via vehicle (Similar to Zion NP).

- Establish a valley only entrance point at the beginning of Southside Drive and maintain the one way valley loop. Provide a designated valley entry lane with a transponder activated lift gate for Park Buses and official vehicles. Park employees and residents vehicles should be marked with a windshield sticker that is visible to the entry station agent. All other vehicles wishing to enter the valley loop must possess a current handicap placard or a camping/hotel registration for valley destinations. All other vehicles will be allowed to continue to the remainder of the non-valley destinations or beyond.

I don't see the southern entrance on the map nor in the plan. As an Airbnb owner in Oakhurst (and a park visitor myself who comes from that direction), this is a big oversight for me. Guests have had to wait for HOURS at that entrance, so it shouldn't be overlooked.

Put entrance stations at the park boundaries, not deep in the park. It is clear that each entrance needs multiple lanes with a dedicated employee lane.

I think the 4 entrances to the park that currently exist are more than adequate. The bigger issue is the sheer number of people trying to get into the park on a given day. Applying a rigorous permit system would help ensure that the entrance stations already in existence are adequate.

## Horsetail Fall Reservations

### Reservations for Park Events

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Commenters expressed general support for a reservation system at entrances during events, such as Horsetail Fall. One commenter suggested the addition of park-and-ride options to coincide with reservations during Firefall. However, one commenter opposed reservations for specific events stating that it is too restrictive.

### Representative Quotes

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| Daily reservations at entrances for events (such as Horsetail Falls).<br>I encourage this strategy. It has been used in the past very successfully. Those wishing to visit for a specific event will be planning ahead for the event anyway and making a reservation will ensure that they can attend.  |
| Having a reservation system in place for special events such as Horsetail Fall/Firefall places too strict a limit on winter recreation outside of Yosemite Valley.  |
| I believe a perfect opportunity to try out some of these park-and-ride plans would be Firefall. Its a horrifically congested park experience, with the vast majority of people making day trips from SF and LA. Shuttles could be rented with reservations required far in advance to allow the park to solicit charter busses from around the state without investing in dedicated shuttles. |
| For events like the "firefall" at Horsetail Fall.   |

## Big Wall Climbing Permits

### Climbing Permit Accessibility Concerns and Improvement Suggestions

Commenters expressed concern about park accessibility for climbers and elements specifically related to the permit system, including that the lack of camping opportunities and restrictive stay limits, specifically for Half Dome, are a barrier for climbers. Commenters suggested improvements to the climbing permit system, which included 1) allowing for flexibility in the time to obtain a climbing permit, 2) having paper forms specific to big wall climbing, and 3) offering unlimited permits for overnight climbing. One commenter stated that obtaining a permit for multi-day trips added logistical complications, resulting in the need for additional time/trip planning. Some commenters suggested that the park remove big wall climbing permits altogether and replace them with multi-day trips.

### Representative Quotes

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| For people who are fortunate enough to get half dome permits, there should be a campsite designated for these people. The normal stay would be 1 to 3 days. Usually a person coming up with a Half Dome permit would probably, the day before to get situated, then hike to Half Dome on the second day, and have a third day to rest up before leaving. In the past there have been talks about re-opening some of the river campgrounds and this would be an ideal area to do that for those that have the Half Dome permit, since it becomes a struggle for them to find housing or lodging while they are there. |
| Indeed, a significant barrier that gets in the way of climbers enjoying or visiting Yosemite include difficulty finding camping opportunities, especially given the restrictive stay limits in the park: a 30-night camping limit within Yosemite National Park in a calendar year, and a 14-night camping limit from May 1 to September 15 (including wilderness camping). This is not enough time for climbers to train/prepare for Yosemite's big walls and complete specific climbing objectives that often require multiple days and repeat attempts.   |
| As a side note I would like to comment that I think the park should eliminate the rock climbing big wall permit as it restricts access from anyone who wants to spend multiple days big wall climbing. The permit adds additional logistic complications which ultimately results in adding additional days to a trip in order to arrange a permit. This makes weekend trips to the valley increasingly difficult to climb bigger objectives. The focus of this regulation should be the people who stash gear, fix ropes and leave trash on the wall in preparation for single day pushes / top down rehearsals.    |

The current big wall climbing permit system is very good, allowing flexibility in timing. Having limited hours to get a permit would be a hardship for many climbers who often arrive in the valley and start climbs at odd hours, and it's logistically very difficult to get back down to a ranger station during business hours, especially if there is wall traffic to contend with.

I would recommend improving the paper forms which you fill out for big wall permits. As of May 2023, it was just a backpacking permit with the words "backpacking" crossed out and replaced with "big wall climbing." Climbing specific forms would allow for education and confirmation of understanding of climbing specific rules such as food storage, human waste pack-out requirements, and rules around stashed gear/fixes ropes.

I am also in favor of free unlimited permits for overnight climbing within the park as a climber. Accountability and responsibility is crucial to the climbing community as we work on ways to keep our outdoor walls in pristine condition as the sport increases in popularity.

## Trip Planning

### Improved Cell Service and Internet Connectivity

Commenters emphasized the need for improved cellular service and internet connectivity throughout the park as trip planning materials are more frequently published online. Commenters noted that cellular service and Wi-Fi help them view maps, rent bikes, and reach out to family members in the park. One commenter suggested adding more signage on the apps the park offers. One commenter noted that being able to save information on the NPS app offline would be useful where internet is not available, like the trail maps app. Commenters emphasized that future internet access in the park should be free of cost. Conversely, some commenters were opposed to improvements to Wi-Fi in the park because the park is natural and remote by nature. Commenters emphasized that communications should be streamlined across various platforms, not solely on the internet.

#### Representative Quotes

Your plan cannot work without internet access in the park. There is a lot of critical information on the Yosemite NPS website but you can't access it in the park!

Free Internet access and whatever improvements in cellular service that are practical would help visitors better plan their activities once in the Valley.

Continue to improve connectivity services and digital access to real-time traffic/parking information. However, recognize that this information will do little to build confidence among traveler planners considering an international or cross-country trip to Yosemite.

Internet/cell connectivity needs to be improved to implement better communication and provide updates on park status in real time.

Don't improve technology- this is a place of nature and no need to muddle that with wifi/internet (or at least not for the general public/visitors).

Improved wi-fi/cell service is desperately needed to get updates and even for safety. There was a vehicle broke down near Yosemite west one night and no one's cell got service in the car or in my family. Wi-Fi is needed to ensure the app/ maps could be used. Even though I downloaded the app, the maps rarely loaded when I was visiting. More signage to inform people of the apps you offer too.

There needs to be much better access to the internet. The only year that I ever had good internet service was when President Obama and his family visited. If we could do it then, why not now. The loanable bikes that are available for people to borrow and use throughout the valley are useless due to the dismal internet service. Visitors and volunteers find it extremely difficult to maintain connections to family due to the connectivity issues. They are especially bad in the evening hours.

## Use of Software, Apps, and Live Feeds to Enhance Trip Planning

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Commenters recommended utilizing specific software to convey real-time traffic and parking information to visitors, such as a live feed of shuttle routes throughout the park, live parking spot availability, or a live count of the number of vehicles in the park. One commenter proposed utilizing artificial intelligence or mapping software to detect crowding and convey alternatives to visitors. Another commenter suggested broadcasting a live video feed of entrance stations lines and popular parking lots. Other commenters suggested that high-tech traffic and parking tracking methods may be costly and ineffective, as many visitors do not use or heed the traffic warnings of existing trip planning information available.

### Representative Quotes

- Enhanced trip planning online or app with real-time road traffic, parking availability, entrance gate traffic, and develop avenue for accurate dissemination of real-time information through gateway partners. Definitely upgrade cell data connectivity for mobile apps to work throughout the day and night, any season.

Using the same AI that retail stores/malls use to detect crowding, YNP should determine how crowded each spot/attraction is and provide this real time data via the park app. This will help visitors plan where to go and what to avoid

The idea of of real time traffic and parking information is intriguing, but I would advise against it. It will be expensive, to implement, is less necessary when the reservation system is in place and will make the park feel like Disneyland or a mall parking structure. I would much prefer "orientation" materials being provided at entrance for visitors less familiar with peak times/locations and parking lots. The social media posts this year were great in spreading awareness and setting expectations with regards to parking and delays. Keep that up!

A live webcam at each entry,would allow visitors a visual,for better planning.

[Trip planning] From a trip planning standpoint, it would be great to have live updates on the status of main parking lots (Curry village, trailhead parking, Yosemite falls)

## Advertising Less-Used Areas of the Park

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Commenters suggested advertising different locations and activities throughout the park online and at entrance stations, particularly those less commonly visited. Suggested materials included park maps, recommended stops, park rules and guidelines (particularly regarding "Leave No Trace" and environmental and conservation issues), and transit opportunities. Some commenters suggested handing out or posting "must-see guides" for specific visitor groups, such as large or young families. Other commenters discouraged additional park visitation advertisements, noting that high visitation rates are currently contributing to difficulties at the park. It was also suggested that the park should coordinate with hospitality businesses in nearby communities to share trip planning options and recommendations. Some commenters suggested requiring visitors complete a brief training course on park rules and regulations prior to entrance.

## Representative Quotes

Promoting other areas aside from Yosemite valley would also be an excellent aid in reducing traffic in the valley 'loop'

Maybe a handout at the gates highlighting key areas would be the cheapest/most effective way to do this. I know you hand out maps but maybe a printout with: the Name of the place, picture and short description. Much like the 'key locations' section on this page of your website.

Trip planning (and improving access to easily understandable information in general) is great at a high level. Regardless of changes to park entry policy, this would be a good thing to improve. That being said, the reality is that the easier it becomes for people to access the park, the worse the crowds will become. The double edged sword of the NPS means that increasing accessibility and publicity of these natural spaces results in worse experiences for visitors and more harm to the space itself. These spaces should be accessible to every person able to reach them, but not at the cost of destroying the area and creating an outdoors Disneyland where there was once a peaceful forest.

Could possibly integrate some of the great social media marketing content into the Yosemite website to help people understand when to go, where to go (especially places which are beautiful and less visited). Everyone sees pictures of the valley and Half Dome so they think that's where they need to go. Highlighting other beautiful areas of the park could help. Maybe a detailed trip planning section that gives suggestions for what to do if you input various factors (trip duration, activities you want to do, visiting with kids/elderly/mobility impaired, and time of year). I think that could be fairly easy to configure from a website perspective and could drive traffic to other areas of the park.

Education of visitors in the Leave No Trace principles would help with the issues of trash, parking and walking in sensitive areas, graffiti, etc. Possibly a LNT brochure could be handed out at the entrance gates. The small mention of LNT in the Yosemite Guide is not enough. Signage, such as the one at Happy Isle that used to say no bikes or dogs needs to be replaced and more signage added in needed areas.

## Methods to Improve Communication with Visitors

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Commenters suggested various methods to improve communication with visitors before and during their visit to the park. Improvements and regular publications were recommended for the park webpage, the NPS app, posted signs approaching park entrances and throughout the park, mass texts, and paper brochures at park entrances among other methods. Commenters recommended communicating entrance wait times, reservation requirements, wheelchair accessibility, weather predictions, trail location, parking lot availability, road closures, and park rules and regulations through these avenues. Commenters discouraged the park from focusing trip planning improvements on online forums because visitors prefer to “unplug” and refrain from using the internet while in the park.

## Representative Quotes

This seems to me a huge area of untapped potential to improve visitor experience. I think the key is to have a unified system. Any type of info media that the NPS puts out must be consistent across all platforms and media types. If a text alert or a facebook post talks about going to such and such a place or avoiding a certain parking area, those place names need to be accurately signed and the same nomenclature used on all road signs, maps, and all walking trail signs. When you are at the entrance of a parking area, you should be able to see the name of the parking area on a sign before you turn in. Maybe Northside Drive and South Side Drive should be signed as such, along with other feeder roads also being named and signed.

Also, the walking trails and bike paths need to have their signage improved. A visitor leaving any of the contact stations, welcome centers, visitor centers, etc. should be able to follow signs that lead them to a comprehensive list of shuttle stops, hiking trails, points of interests, and food services. When the shuttle buses are too crowded it is often faster and more enjoyable to walk. For instance if a person wants to hike from the Visitor Center Parking lot to Mirror lake they should be able to follow signs the whole way, or to Curry Village, or Lower Falls, etc. Many times it is quicker to hike to these places than wait for the bus.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Access

### Bike Rental Program

Commenters requested that the park provide a more robust bike rental program, complete with advance reservations or through an app-based bike rental system, dedicated rental areas that visitors could be shuttled to from outside the park, and specific parking zones for those who want to trade the use of their car for bikes for the day. One commenter suggested the park create new areas for bike rental stations away from overcrowded sections of the park, such as Curry Village, Yosemite Lodge, and Yosemite Village. Commenters requested the park provide several new types of bikes to rent, including three-wheeled bikes, tandem bikes, and mountain bikes.

In order to allow visitors more freedom with moving around the park with rented bikes, commenters suggested the park supply bike lock stations and bike locks, and that visitors may stop and go as they travel throughout the park without fear that another visitor may accidentally take a rented bike. Commenters requested the park allow visitors to rent a bike for more than one day at a time so visitors can use them outside daily rental times and store them at campsites or outside the hotel to use when desired. One commenter suggested the park remove the bike rental business from the concession company and instead run a bike rental service themselves with lower, more inclusive prices.

## Representative Quotes

Additional paths to popular trail heads and easy bike lock stations should be added. Yosemite should also explore an easy, inexpensive way for visitors to access loaned bikes while in the park. By encouraging visitors to park their vehicle in one location for the duration of their stay and use a bike to get around Yosemite Valley could also reduce vehicle flow and parking issues.

One of my biggest recommendations is for the park service to remove the bike rental business from the concession company. The park service should run the bike rental service as a non-profit to encourage as much biking in the valley as possible. Make it so that anyone can afford to rent a bike for the day (\$10/day) for example. Make the park even more bike friendly.

More access points for, and cheaper bicycle rentals, including three wheelers; for us old farts and for folks with pets or toddlers (though why one would bring a toddler anywhere confounds me).

Allow automatic or app-based rentals of bikes in the Valley, so visitors can rent bikes more easily and park them or drop them off at more locations without worrying they will get stolen.

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| Update your bicycle rentals quality with new mountain bikes (some are SO old) and add more secure ways of securing equipment with your bike around the park (discreet lockboxes next to bike stands so that you can put your keys and wallet inside while on a hike) to encourage people to use bikes.  |
| Further more add bicycles and tandum bikes or group bicycle so you have multiple people and they can have storage like a golf carts for their backpacks and similar things.   |
| Allow people to rent the bikes for more than one day at a time so they can use them outside the daily rental times. E.g. they could be ridden to dinner during summer daylight hours.   |
| I would highly suggest a more robust bike rental program, complete with advance reservations, dedicated rental areas, and specific parking zones for those planning to explore the valley on rented bikes. Creating a new area for this rental program away from currently overcrowded spots, could help to prevent frustrating experiences at popular areas such as Curry Village, Yosemite Lodge, and Yosemite Village. |
| Bike rentals in the valley would be amazing and building a large parking structure outside the park that shuttled people into the bike rental area would be smart thinking.   |

## **Pedestrian Overpass**

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Some commenters felt that a pedestrian overpass would increase pedestrian safety as well as help traffic flow. One commenter noted that while a pedestrian overpass may help alleviate pedestrian safety impacts from traffic, an overpass would also cause a barrier for mobility-impaired visitors who would no longer be easily able to approach Yosemite Falls. The commenter stated that the overpass would require an elevator.

In contrast, commenters were against the installation of an overpass in Yosemite Valley because it would be expensive and would suggest that cars take precedent over pedestrians. Commenters suggested the park provide a simpler solution, such as installing a timed crosswalk/stoplight system or providing a park ranger to direct traffic flow.

### ***Representative Quotes***

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| The one area where pedestrians most impact vehicular traffic is the cross walk at Yosemite Falls from the Yosemite Lodge area. A pedestrian overpass might help some, but this is an area where mobility-impaired visitors can easily approach Yosemite Falls. A pedestrian overpass would be a significant barrier to such individuals unless it also included an elevator. |
| Finally, we have seen that one of the primary impediments to the flow of traffic is the pedestrian crossing between Yosemite Lodge and the Yosemite Falls trail. Establishing a pedestrian bridge or undercrossing at this location would significantly help traffic flow and make crossing the road safer for pedestrians as well.  |
| Pedestrian overpasses are a terrible idea. They are expensive and tell everyone that the car is a first-class citizen and people are not important. Pedestrian overpasses are to separate modes of travel when they are incompatible, like crossing a freeway. Traffic moves slowly in the valley and car speed should NOT be prioritized.                                   |
| Pedestrian overpasses seem overkill, even at the big crossing to Yosemite falls. Much simpler solution would be installing a timed crosswalk/stoplight system (off during winter, fixed schedule during summer), or keeping a traffic ranger to direct flow.   |

## **Separate Bicycle and Pedestrian Lanes**

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Commenters requested the park provide separated walking and biking paths, either as different paths or by providing a physical barrier between the different visitor types. Commenters suggested that separating bikers and pedestrians would be safer for both groups. One commenter requested the

park install signage to help keep pedestrians and bikers on their own designated paths. Commenters noted that bikers and pedestrians on the same path was dangerous given the potential for bikers to hit pedestrians.

### **Representative Quotes**

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| More detailed and frequent signage for bike paths in order to separate pedestrians from bike paths. Have detailed training done in various languages for bike rental shops to educate bike renters of rules for biking in the park.  |
| If you're going to have dedicated bike paths, please also have pedestrian only paths. Bike and peds just don't mix well.   |
| Honestly, I also was worried about hitting pedestrians on the paths. People walking are looking at the gorgeous scenery and not paying attention to whether bikes are coming or not. I saw near misses with those on bikes and those walking many times. I think there should be some kind of physical barrier between the bikers and walkers. People should not walk on the bike portions of the path. This will keep children safer, because they are often the most unaware and the least predictable with regard to where they will move to for a biker on the path. |

### **New Bike Path Locations**

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Commenters suggested the park expand dedicated bike path locations through South Valley to include El Capitan and Bridalveil Fall, around the Valley Loop by making it a biking loop, to Tunnel View, to Northside Drive and Southside Drive from Pohono Bridge, from Swinging Bridge to Pohono Bridge, and around the west side of the valley. One commenter suggested repurposing the old, paved stock trails for bike use.

Commenters noted that bikes should not be present on the road at all, due to safety issues related to cars. One commenter suggested the park make it illegal for bikes to be on the roads when there are bike paths throughout the park.

### **Representative Quotes**

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| Please improve /increase bike/mountain bike access in the Valley. Repurpose the old paved stock trails to use for bicycles.   |
| YES, please expand bicycle and pedestrian options. Make the valley loop trail a bike loop. People already bike it (illegally). At the very least, make it possible to bike down to El Capitan and back safely. Trying to bike on Yosemite Valley roads, which are narrow and full of inexperienced RV drivers, all of whom are distracted by the beauty in front of them and the chaos of cars and pedestrians, is awful. The experience could be so much better. |
| Get more bicycles in the park and expand bicycle paths to Tunnel View and El Capitan.   |
| Expand Bicycle and Pedestrian Options - Bike lanes should be added to Northside Dr and Southside Dr from Pohono Bridge into the valley.   |
| Expand bicycle routes from Swinging Bridge to Pohono Bridge, possibly utilizing portions of the Valley Loop Trail.  |

Bikes on the road is a huge problem coupled with the sheer number of cars. Bikes absolutely SHOULD NOT be on the road at all. This is a problem in the valley where drivers can't always pass them, especially when there's a bike lane less than ten feet away that they could be using but simply choose not to, compounding traffic. But the problem is multiplied on roads such as up to Wawona, El Portel, and Crane flat where there ARE no bike paths and cars cannot legally or safely pass bikes. Wawona is especially dangerous with all the blind turns, having to drive to Wawona several times a week for work I have seen so many accidents involving cars trying to pass and colliding with oncoming traffic.

There is no reason a bike should be on the road when there are so many bike paths available, and in areas where there are no bike paths such as highway 41 the bike has no business being there anyway. It only causes traffic at least and poses a serious danger to both bikers and drivers at worst.

Comments: Bring back the reservation system and make it illegal for bikes to be on the road.

## Alternative Transportation

### Ban Cars from the Park

Commenters suggested that private vehicles be banned or significantly restricted from entering the park. Some commenters suggested that only specific groups, such as employees, overnight visitors, backpackers, those with parking permits, electric vehicle owners, those traveling through the park on Highway 120, and carpoolers be permitted to drive into the park. Other commenters suggested charging an increased entry fee for private vehicle entry or only requiring a reservation permit for private vehicles. Other commenters suggested that removing parking at trailheads may discourage visitors from using private vehicles. One commenter suggested that private vehicles be banned during peak season or in especially popular areas.

#### *Representative Quotes*

A system that manages the number of visitors as well as the number of cars. Consideration should be given to limiting noise of vehicles and other human caused noise.

Only those staying overnight and possibly those that are climbing should enter the valley with an automobile. Increased access to bicycles and other modes of transport for unable to bike. Keep the valley free of automobiles as much as possible.

### Electric Vehicles / E-Bikes

Commenters suggested that the park provide additional infrastructure to encourage the use of electric vehicles, such as charging stations. Some commenters suggested the park provide e-bike rental opportunities throughout the park, with pedal-assist options for those with mobility complications. Other commenters expressed concern over the increased use of e-bikes, as their higher speeds may cause safety concerns for other bikers and pedestrians on shared pathways. Some commenters suggested providing separate pathways for e-bike users to avoid collisions.

## Representative Quotes

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| Allow low-speed pedal assist ebikes (important for senior access.)   |
| If they expand e-bike use, they need to remember that electric motorized bikes are motor vehicles and must be managed as such. Do not open any previously unmotorized routes to electric motor bikes.  |
| Comments: Topic Question 2:<br>A free e-bike sharing system would be a great way to encourage people to get around the park without needing to use a vehicle. This would allow people to bike one way, and shuttle back, or go point to point without having to go back to their car every time. It would allow for the shuttles to be less crowded, and people who didn't want to wait could just hop on a bike and leave it at the next stop. The bike stations can be solar charging which makes them clean and energy efficient too. |
| In our community in southern California, we are facing the growing popularity of e-bikes that has led to many steps to try to improve safety for battery and non-battery bicycle riders. I assume Yosemite is also seeing growing numbers of e-bikes that may benefit from new safety measures.  |

## Shuttles – Access from Outside the Park

### Park and Ride

Commenters suggested the park construct a large parking area or parking garage just outside the boundary of the park, at some or all entrances, and to have visitors shuttled into the park. To increase the appeal of this option, commenters suggested increasing the cost of entry into the park when using a private vehicle or requiring shuttle use for some or all visitors. Some commenters suggested that all visitors without a reservation be required to enter the park via park-and-ride shuttle. It was noted that the park could utilize existing large, unused parking lots in nearby communities, such as the Mariposa County Fair lot. Others noted that the time visitors spent onboard shuttles can be spent educating them on park rules and guidelines.

## Representative Quotes

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| Just the off-site shuttle system mentioned above. You need to have a HUGE parking area with adequate shuttle buses to bring visitors into the valley. And, then another shuttle system to transport people around the valley. This could be a free shuttle like Zion or Sequoia. But, I'd also support a pay system. Some kind of system where people could hop on and off shuttles at desired scenic spots, stores, museums, etc. with enough shuttles to make this work. No cars or other personal vehicles without proof of a camping or lodging reservation   |
| More expanded park and rides outside of the entrance gates, where they can take a Yosemite shuttle, will help tremendously. Perhaps make part of the mariposa grove parking lot a park and ride for the valley, and create a shuttle for the grove from the valley floor in the busy summer months. 1 bus takes over up to 50 cars off the road in the valley if used well, similar to Zion. Separate entrance lines for the shuttle will make the shuttle "the best way to go" instead of using a car. If people feel it's the best way to enjoy the valley based on experience and feedback, they'll be more likely to do it. |
| I would like to see personal vehicles banned from the valley for all able-bodied visitors. Employees, disabled users, etc should be able to drive in, but everyone else should have to park outside the valley (maybe even outside of the entire park) and use public transit for getting around.   |

## Shuttle to Park from Local Hotels and Communities

Commenters suggested that the park partner with surrounding communities to facilitate public or private shuttle routes from resorts, hotels, and other highly populated locations. Some commenters

suggested requiring nearby hospitality and tourism businesses to shuttle all of their patrons in for free or paid. Some commenters suggested that all private tour buses and rideshare business such as Uber be banned from the park, while others noted that tour buses and rideshare apps should be supported and receive preference in the entry process.

**Representative Quotes**

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| <p>* Expand regional connectivity by partnering with local businesses (such as hotel shuttles and commercial use authorization shuttles).</p>   |
| <p>A shuttle system also means prohibiting day-use tour bus operators from Yosemite Valley. If a tour bus operator wants to bring day-use visitors to Yosemite, that tour bus operator should park outside the park along with all the other day-use visitors and the tour bus visitors should also ride the Park shuttle. They also should be required to have a Reservation from April 15 to November 1.</p>  |
| <p>Having shuttle services from local hotels and towns would be a better way to help with personal vehicle congestion. For example, have shuttle services from a local hotel in Oakhurst to the park entrance. Then park shuttle busses from the entrance to different locations in the park. Visitors would have to buy their park passes electronically or from the hotel/town and show proof to the shuttle service before boarding. Then when the hotel shuttle gets to the park entrance, it can go directly through (possible employees only entrance or a designated bus entrance to a shuttle depot.) Then at the designated drop off location visitors can catch the park shuttle to different locations throughout the park. Finally reverse all that to transport people out of the park back to the hotels. A lot of people from other countries are used to a public transit, so this could be very beneficial for those who are international or from urban areas.<br/>This would take working with the local towns and businesses. The shuttle services would need to run from before dawn to well after sunset.</p> |
| <p>In the app and/or on the website, have in real time shuttle bus arrival times. Add more shuttle busses and stops and have them run for longer periods of time, from before dawn to well after sunset.</p>  |
| <p>It would be great to see a more streamlined/more direct shuttle option from larger cities like Fresno (2-3 hours) and more options. Many people who come to visit stay or live in this area and it could cut down massively on traffic. This would need to be paired with an internal park shuttle (to main areas) as well so that visitors using public transport could access main areas.</p>  |
| <p>The communities that want more tourism should be on board with providing parking and helping fund such a transit system so that the park can handle the demand. Providing paid parking / lodging and retail opportunities seems as though it would benefit those communities, while easing the strain on the park's infrastructure.</p>  |
| <p>How about a Yosemite NPS-conducted 'One Day Yosemite Valley Tour'? This could be a high-capacity bus (50+) that departs from park-and-ride spots OUTSIDE the park (Groveland, El Portal, Mariposa). Have park rangers narrate the history of Yosemite on the bus ride. Take all visitors to the key spots (Lower Falls, Cook's meadow, El Cap viewing, Half Dome, a 1 mile hike somewhere). CURATE the best experience for visitors who just want to see Yosemite in a day. Provide accessible options, lunch, narration, history, etc. This would reduce parking issues, traffic, pollution, congestion... tour participants can drive back home from OUTSIDE the park at the end of the day.</p>   |

**Shuttles – Connectivity with Regional Transit**

**Improved Regional Transit Opportunities**

Commenters suggested the park prioritize improving regional transit opportunities to and from the park, including Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS), Bay Area Rapid Transit, Amtrak, local community, and commercial shuttle services. Some commenters requested extended routes both in and outside the park, more frequent stops, longer running seasons, and longer running hours each day. In order to make regional transit more appealing to visitors, commenters

suggested lowering transit costs, running direct routes to and from the airport, increasing marketing efforts, including a park reservation with each transit pass, tours in and outside the park, additionally capacity for camping and biking gear, better connectivity between transit routes, additional parking near stops, and increased staffing. One commenter suggested the park investigate the amount of resources spent on YARTs and private vehicle access to the park, respectively, in an effort to determine a course of action to increase YARTs utilization into the park.

### **Representative Quotes**

I would like to see YARTS coordinate with other providers (for example, Eastern Sierra Transit and Amtrak) to set up better/more connections between services. This has improved over the years and it's now possible to make same day connections all the way from Bishop to the bay area, but there are few scheduling options and some wait times are unacceptably long for the average traveler.

The YARTS and the shuttle system within the YNP needs to be improved, promoted and incentivized. If the goal is to protect Yosemite's fundamental resources, values and improve visitor access and opportunities while reducing carbon and vehicular congestion then local visitors, employees and out of area visitors to YNP should be easily be able to access YARTS from the community they are living or staying into the park and connect with shuttles. Visitors from foreign should be able to take YARTS from the airport directly to their accommodations in or out of YNP and access shuttles within YNP. This would need significant investment in equipment and operating costs but this investment would make the investments in implementing other strategies such as an improved reservation systems, upgrading and modernizing the entrance stations, changing physical infrastructure to reduce conflict between vehicles, bicycles pedestrians and equestrians unnecessary. This also a more immediate solution.

How one arrives at the park is the key problem. The only viable (and cheapest) option is arriving via personal automobile. An adult YARTS ticket from Merced is \$44. A single car (7 people) can arrive via free roads and a paltry \$35 entrance fee. YARTS for 7 people would be over \$300, almost TEN TIMES the cost of arriving by car. When folks fly to CA to get to Yosemite, they rent a car. It's the only option. For a family, even renting a car for a day is cheaper than 1 day on YARTS.

I hope YARTS buses bypass the entrance station lines...

You need to charge a per-car fee (\$50?), and lower the per-person fee to like \$2 This should allow YARTS prices to lower significantly. So a car full of five people would be \$10, plus the car fee. It should be cheaper to ride YARTS than at least three people in a car.

I think it would be really interesting to examine how many resources (human, dollars, space, etc) the park allocates to cars versus public transportation. I know the park provides subsidies to YARTS - are those sufficient to ensure reliable and convenient access? how does it compare to the time, money, and resources spent on ensuring reliable and convenient car access. Thinking for example of the traffic team expenses and Law enforcement time operating and responding to traffic issues. I feel like the majority of people that use public transportation to get to the park are really those who have no other options, and they do this despite all of the access challenges. The times I've used YARTS, I've loved it, but it was despite the hurdles of planning, and with a lack of certainty that I would get to where I needed to go. It is not easy to get into the park without a car. How can we make this different, so that cars are not the default way to get into the park?

## **Development of a Rail Transit System**

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Some commenters suggested developing a train, monorail, light rail, or cable car system that runs between the park and larger cities in the region, such as San Francisco, Sacramento, and Fresno. It is suggested that this could decrease parking needs in and around the park, lessen the environmental impact of transportation, and provide a scenic route into the park.

### Representative Quotes

Longer term, it would be worth lobbying the state to provide funding for a train from a parking structure in Fresno or elsewhere in the foothills to bring in visitors, in order to reduce the impact of a growing demand for centralized parking to enter the valley. Cable cars might also be a faster model of transport down into the valley that could reduce congestion.

Create a scenic train that brings visitors into the park from Oakland or San Francisco. A lot of places in Europe have this and being able to have timed trains, allows more revenue generation to improve facilities but also limits or reduces cars on the road. You could even do trains at 30min intervals from 4am-9am allowing to be in the park by midday. This could be also used as a long term path to having no public vehicles drive into the valley. Would love to see this as it would allow for control of visitor numbers and preserve Yosemite. Huge project but would improve experience for everyone and preserve the valley for generations to come by limiting visitor numbers and reducing cars on the road.

## Shuttles – Internal Park Shuttle

### Shuttle Accessibility

Commenters emphasized the importance of shuttle accessibility for persons with disabilities and mobility issues, children, and families. Long wait times for shuttles were highlighted as a key concern. Commenters also emphasized the need for shuttles that can accommodate riders with large amounts of gear for mobility, camping, picnicking, and other outdoor activities, as well as pets. Commenters emphasized the need for a more organized and streamlined shuttle waiting and boarding process.

### Representative Quotes

The current shuttle options in the Valley don't seem like they are made to accommodate any specific user needs. Can Yosemite better highlight options for sit down buses and their schedules for older and limited mobility visitors? Can Yosemite better highlight trailhead shuttles, and especially their time schedules, for hiker and backpackers?

I don't know how this could address the car campers and climbers. Perhaps a special shuttle set up for gear would suffice.

I would not have an issue taking a bus from the entry gates to the Village, but they would HAVE to allow dogs, or I couldn't take it.

The shuttle system also works. However, I would recommend clear onboarding lines/lanes like they have at amusement parks (yes, like Disneyland). The last time I was in the valley several years ago the entrance to the busses were mobbed and people pushed and shoved to get on. This tension can be reduced by having temporary lanes made from cones and ribbons at each of the pickup points so that people know what is expected and how to queue up.

### Additional Shuttles and Increased Frequency of Stops

Commenters expressed their frustration with shuttle wait times. Commenters suggested increasing shuttle frequency and capacity by adding additional shuttles and shuttle stops, increasing shuttle size, increasing shuttle staffing, and lengthening shuttle operation times. It was also suggested that increased shuttle efficiency may encourage more visitors to use the service, rather than drive their own personal vehicle.

### Representative Quotes

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| Bus frequency needs to be increased. Busses were so infrequent and so crowded that they became ineffective this summer.  |
| Having more buses run within the valley during peak events (ie Horsetail falls) is also a good idea.   |
| The number and frequency of valley shuttles need to be increased greatly during high season. Some shuttle lines were so long at popular spots that people had to wait for numerous shuttles before being able to get on one, and then had to stand in the shuttle most of the time. The park needs to invest the money into providing adequate shuttle service during the high season.   |
| The current dysfunctional shuttle system is at the root of many of the crowd control problems in the park. Shuttles operate infrequently, and then, when one does arrive, it is packed full, and often simply bypasses the shuttle stop. This is what drives increased visitor desire to arrive in and then use a private vehicle during their visit. The shuttle system must increase capacity so that daily visitation can be accommodated without shuttles exceeding 85% of seats filled. This would increase shuttle system operating costs. Cost could be recovered by including a shuttle system support fee in the cost of each reservation. Shuttle scheduling can be predicted from the number of reservations for that day combined with daily public transit schedule and bus capacity. |
| A shuttle system that operated efficiently and comfortably to carry visitors between destinations would go a long way to encourage increased day use visitation based on public transit and reduce visitor desire to use private vehicles within the valley.   |
| Improved bus systems and ability to safely bike around the valley would strongly encourage these services' utilization, and for folks just spending a whole day in the Valley, it's easiest regardless to park once and take other forms of transportation around the Valley.  |

### Additional Shuttle Routes

Commenters suggested additional shuttle routes to areas such as El Portal, Rush Creek Lodge, Glacier Point, Tuolumne Grove, Crane Flat, White Wolf, Hodgdon Meadows, Wawona, Mariposa Grove. A new non-stop express route to key points within the park was suggested. It was also suggested that climbers be able to request a stop on shuttle routes to access claiming points. Some suggested a route that runs directly through the valley and back. Others suggested a dedicated shuttle for in-park hotel guests or employees. Additionally, commenters suggested creating a dedicated lane for shuttles on main roads to avoid traffic and decrease wait times between shuttles.

### Representative Quotes

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| Busses need dedicated traffic lanes to travel  |
| Waiting for busses significantly and adversely impacted our family visit experience to Yosemite. The experience was so frustrating, it exacerbated the feeling of Yosemite being overcrowded, when in fact most areas were not crowded. Many, many more busses are called for even at great expense. |
| The shuttle should get traffic preference and a dedicated lane.  |
| Have you considered less shuttle stops? Would dedicated non-stop routes covering key locations, such as an east valley route connection Curry, the village, and the lodge, and a west valley route from the lodge to the Bridalveil/Capitan area and to Curry?                                       |
| And routes should include destinations outside the valley like Glacier Point and Mariposa Grove. I like expanding park and ride options from the region outside of the park itself, as well as enhanced YARTS connectivity and rideshare opportunities.  |

Expand the shuttles to cover more scenarios- -including free shuttles from the valley to Glacier Point, valley to Tuolumne Meadows, and maybe even valley to Wawona/Mariposa Grove. Shuttles need to be able to accommodate hiking gear (backpacks, poles, child carriers) and bikes

Shuttle only lanes inside the valley will help a lot, similar to the happy isles area. People with lodging in the park should be able to drive around, as well as a limited number of vehicle reservations, but otherwise shuttles should be the way to go, with expanded number of shuttles and less traffic.

Tuolomne Meadows seems somewhat undervisited compared to the valley, but I sure like it a lot. Getting there seems to mostly be done by car, given limited bus options. I'd promote the heck out of it, and experiment with fairly frequent bus trips so that people feel they can take the bus there, take a hike somewhere, and then find a bus within a reasonable time for their next stop or their return. Otherwise you run into the problem of everyone feeling like they have to use their car to get up there.

Honor climbers by offering an avenue to reservations that allows for flexibility and spontaneity. Climbers need to be able to plan around the weather and other factors. They also may need to start very early morning and finish late at night and need to carry heavy loads to unusual trail heads. Allow "request stops" on shuttle buses.

## Zero-Emission Shuttles

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Commenters suggested utilizing additional or alternative modes of transportation for the shuttle service, including zero-emission electric buses, horse carriages, and pedi-cabs.

### *Representative Quotes*

2. All of the shuttles in the park should be zero-emission electric or hydrogen vehicles. This fulfills two goals: not contributing to air pollution in the park, and fostering an atmosphere of silence which will greatly enhance the park experience.

I would like to see a people powered shuttle in the valley. I believe a human powered shuttle could alleviate summer crowding and enhance visitor experience. Shuttles could be built with seats and pedals provided for those who would like to help and regular seats for those unable or who choose not to help. Effective ratio between passengers and participants would need to be established. Reduction of greenhouse gasses major benefit.

## Shuttles – Other

### Shuttle Improvements

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Commenters suggested improvements to the shuttle system that would provide for a better visitor experience. Commenters suggested shuttle seats face windows in order for visitors to better enjoy the scenery around them. Other commenters requested shuttles be equipped with bathrooms. Other commenters suggested guided tours on shuttles should be facilitated through headphones rather than out loud.

### *Representative Quotes*

Incentivize transportation providers to equip their bus service with toilets.

Add guided tours during the summer (3rd party maybe). Think Hop on and Off Busses in every tourist city. Starting from outside the park and doing the loop. Eliminates people just driving around the park.

I would eliminate the tour narration on the open air bus and replace it with a headphone taped narrative. Part of the Beauty of Yosemite are the sounds. Visitors hearing the amplified tour guide is disturbing! This is not Disneyland or the Zoo!

## Contributions to Shuttle System from Surrounding Community

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Commenters requested that the park consider the contributions that tourism and hospitality businesses in surrounding communities make to the park shuttle system during the planning process. Commenters noted that these businesses provide more concentrated points of origin for shuttles, buses, and carpools outside the park which decrease the total amount of traffic within the park.

### *Representative Quotes*

As you are aware, many local hotels partner with YNP or transportation service providers to help guests enter the park and reduce the total number of vehicles entering YNP. Should these local hotels fail, it would disrupt these services and may actually increase the number of vehicles commuting to and entering the park, rendering the practice counter to the intent of YNP. As noted in the previous section, this would also increase the difficulty of promoting public or common transit options because the total number of points of origin for day trips would significantly increase.

Many of our member hotels are located in communities which rely directly upon tourism in Yosemite National Park (YNP) or serve travelers who ultimately travel to YNP during their trips. According to feedback from these members, implementation of YNP's Peak-Hours Reservation System (Reservation System) reduced the total annual income of reporting local hotels by approximately 20% and, as a result, threatened the financial viability of a number of establishments. Should these establishments shutter their doors, guests will be forced to travel farther in order to enter the park and will initiate their travel from a greater number of locations, increasing the difficulty of promoting public or common transit options.

## Infrastructure – Roads and Parking Lots

### Equestrian Access

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Many commenters expressed concern about accessibility for private stock users. Commenters suggested that equestrian access should be incorporated as a strategy to alleviate traffic and parking congestion. Commenters suggested restoring parking for equestrian trailers on the valley floor, Glacier Point Road, and Wawona and allowing for overnight boarding to better accommodate stock users. Commenters noted that information on the park website does not accurately reflect what is available or accessible to private stock users.

### *Representative Quotes*

I attended your last meeting in July on line and submitted a question about private stock use in the park and how you were going accommodate us, but it wasn't addressed or answered. I am aware that you have received many comments concerning private stock use. We were told that the suggestions submitted would be considered. However, nothing in the current potential strategies proposed by the YNP visitor access management plan reflects any consideration to private stock users. It is disingenuous of your management planning team to focus only on bicycle and pedestrian options, and not include the horse community. We ask that we be included in the strategies that promote car-less transportation. In my experience most tourists love to see horses in their park. Horses and mules are part of our history, and many of the trails that are in use today are there because them. The Merced River Plan does not eliminate or reduce access for private equestrian use. By ignoring our requests, you are in violation of this Plan.

We ask that you allow overnight boarding and day use parking at the Yosemite Valley and Wawona stables. We also ask that you make White Wolf available for horse camping and riding. This will relieve some of the congestion in Yosemite Valley. We are also disappointed that you overlooked us when you repaved the Glacier Point Road. There is now no place for horse trailers to park to access the trailheads at McGurk Meadow, Ostrander or Mono Meadow. I sincerely hope that this was an oversight because we were told that the parking would be improved. If we are allowed to access trails outside of the valley, it will also help relieve the congestion that you have created and are now experiencing in Yosemite Valley.

Our organizations are dedicated to improving and promoting the use, care and development of backcountry trails, campsites, streams and meadows. Whether you realize it or not, equestrians have a lot to offer Yosemite National Park. We practice "Leave No Trace" and educate others to do the same. We love Yosemite, and ask that you support the time honored historical use of horses and mules in Yosemite Valley and beyond.

restore and maintain multi-use trails for equestrians and other users on the valley floor.

Comments: I'm a local horse person and a frequent visitor to YNP for the last thirty years. I have seen horse campsites eliminated and horse trailer parking significantly reduced. Equestrian access and parking are not addressed or even mentioned anywhere in the potential strategies.

Many local equestrians have sent in comments regarding their concerns about managed access, parking, and safety. At the July meeting we were assured that the suggestions for reopening the stable in the valley for overnight to private stock boarding and day use private stock parking and other suggestions submitted by private stock users would be considered. Nothing in the current potential strategies proposed by YNP plan mentions equestrian use. However, extensive consideration is given to expanding bicycle and pedestrian options as a car-less option. In fact, the recent installation of curbs and sidewalks on the valley floor make maneuvering vehicles and trailers exceedingly difficult if not impossible. The usual locations for horse trailer parking (stables and near the chapel are no longer accessible) and the parking areas that were promised to the horse community at popular trail heads along Glacier Point Road have not been included with the new resurfacing project. The result is NO place to safely park or load horses.

According to the Merced River Plan: "The NPS final Alternative 5 does not eliminate or reduce access for private equestrian use." By ignoring our concerns and potential strategies and not including private stock users in any of the proposed potential strategies, we perceive that YNP is violating that provision of the plan. Clearly, the equestrian community is being displaced and private stock users are no longer welcome in YNP.

Restore parking and access for equestrians on the valley floor, Wawona and Glacier Point Road

There is no plan for equestrian parking on the valley floor and Glacier Point. We feel that we are being squeezed out and no longer welcome in the park.

Comments: Topic Question 2:

Yes, we have been told that we are allowed to park at the stables but run into the problem of busses and other equipment taking up what little space we have. We feel that parking at Curry Village or other areas around the valley are not as safe as we have been boxed in by other vehicles not realizing that we need space around us.

Comments: I (as well as fellow equestrians) have been riding in the Valley and Glacier Point (we no longer have parking for our rigs) for many years now and we are disappointed and feel ignored by the powers that be in the parks planning. Please consider us in the future when making plans that affect us. You may contact me at (209)840-3224 or email me at wiglwagl.k@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

The Sierra Freepackers, a unit of the Back Country Horsemen of California are disappointed that equestrian access to YNP and parking is not being addressed or even mentioned anywhere in the potential strategies. Private stock users have participated in the July meeting and have sent in comments regarding their concerns about managed access, parking and safety during and prior to the meeting. At the meeting in July we were assured that the suggestions submitted by private stock users, such as reopening the valley stable for overnight day use private stock parking would be considered. Nothing in the current potential strategies proposed by the YNP visitor access management planning team reflects any consideration to private stock users while considerable consideration is given to expanding bicycle and pedestrian options as a car-less option.

According to the Merced River Plan: "The NPS final Alternative 5 (Preferred) does not eliminate or reduce access for private equestrian use." Reducing or eliminating private equestrian parking is reducing access. By ignoring our concerns and potential strategies and not including private stock users in any of the proposed potential strategies, we perceive that YNP is ignoring that provision of the plan. This gives weight to the sentiment among private stock users that we are no longer welcome in YNP.

The YNP website states Stock Use/The Front Country Stock section of the NPS website says "Stock can be unloaded and loaded at any stock camp, designated stock area, or any concession stable". The NPS response to concern 291 "Equine user parking needs" in (Appendix P Draft Concerns Responses, Merced River Plan, Pg 163) "...Oversized vehicles (Including trucks with horse trailers may park at the Yosemite Lodge and concessioner stables. In reality we can't. The valley stable is often it is blocked off from parking or so full of construction equipment and other large vehicles that there isn't any space for private stock users. We have been confronted by YNP employees and told that we can't park there. Verbally stock users were told by YNP employees to park at Curry Village and Yosemite Lodge bus parking areas which are not safe to load and unload stock. We have also been confronted by YNP employees and told that we can't park there either.

The YNP website also states that Horse boarding is offered at the Yosemite Valley Stable. Reservations are highly recommended due to limited space. Contact 209.372.8326. In fact horse boarding is not available at either the Valley or Wawona stables. I have called this and the 209 372-4386 number listed on the YNP website multiple times and have never had it answered.

Restoring overnight boarding at the Valley and Wawona stables would relieve some congestion of the 2+ hours one way drive from any entrance station to the valley. We would like to see Strategies that address overnight parking and day parking at the stables or any safe designated area in the valley.

The Sierra Freepackers propose that private stock users be included along with pedestrians and bicycles in strategies that promote carless transportation.

Comments: The Sierra Freepackers, a unit of the Back Country Horsemen of California are disappointed that equestrian access to YNP and parking is not being addressed or even mentioned anywhere in the potential strategies.

## Parking Infrastructure Inside the Park

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Commenters stated their support for new parking lot infrastructure and offered site-specific suggestions. Commenters suggested converting underutilized areas, such as the lower and upper river campgrounds and Bridalveil. Other suggestions pertained to converting Wawona golf course to a parking area, utilizing Badger Pass as a park-and-ride lot, creating parking at Foresta, eliminating valet parking at Ahwahnee Hotel, and creating more overnight/long-term parking at campgrounds. Commenters expressed concern that the removal of parking lots (e.g., Yosemite Village and Yosemite Falls) and roadside parking (e.g., Tuolumne Meadows) would create more congestion.

### *Representative Quotes*

I believe we all can agree that it is nice to have curbs along the Tuolumne Meadows roadway that limit traffic pull-offs and parking on the side of the road and the damage that occurs to the edge of the roadway and the plant life. And it most definitely improves the views. However, with improvement comes the fact that there are now not enough pull-offs after construction, for people to pull off and enjoy the views. One of the biggest oversights in this area was that when the roadside parking was terminated by the curbing, not enough parking was created elsewhere to offset the loss of roadside parking. Nor was the additional parking that was created (or proposed) in the place where it needs to be. It also looks like future growth in tourism was not considered. If you were to do a simple traffic flow analysis, you would find that a parking lot back in the trees at Cathedral Lakes trailhead should have been incorporated into the plan to eliminate roadside parking. And yes, we are aware of the expansion of the parking lot at the visitor's center which is woefully inadequate. This expansion was needed just for the visitor center alone which sometimes has no parking at peak visitation. Additionally, the number of parking places created, falls short of the roadside parking. The extra mile added to the Cathedral Lakes and Peaks trail will certainly not be daunting to seasoned hikers, but to the average visiting hiker that day hikes, it may.

Additionally, it increases traffic problems and flows at the visitor's center. It actually makes things worse, as Cathedral Lake Trial Hikers now park overnight and for longer terms at the visitor center, causing a shortage of parking places for visitors. We know that this additional parking is inadequate due to the numerous instances where not a single vacant parking space was available, forcing people to do laps or long-distance drop-offs, which increases traffic load in the Tuolumne Meadows area.

• The removal and relocation of parking lots at Yosemite Village and Yosemite Falls have created greater congestion from vehicles and pedestrian crosswalks. Restoring these parking spots and potentially creating more parking (for example, at Rivers Campgrounds) would allow for more guests to drive into the park.

It is CSERC's recommendation that whether it is part of the VAMP plan or a subsequent Park plan, that the Park staff carefully evaluate the current potential for public support for a large capacity complex of parking areas at Foresta that would be designed so that the parking sites could be located in between existing clumps of trees so as to provide well-screened parking for those desiring to take a shuttle between the Foresta area and East Yosemite Valley.

More parking needs to be made. A perfect location for an additional overflow parking lot is the former Upper River Campground that is now used for storage of rock and debris. It is along the bus route and therefore easy access to anyplace. It is an easy formula: the more parking, the less traffic.

The restoration of Upper River Campgrounds would give people more places to stay in the valley which would cut down on traffic. Why is this area being used as a unsightly dump? Over or underpasses or traffic controls are needed at the Yosemite Falls and the Yosemite Lodge intersections and from the day use parking lot to the Cooks Meadow area.

Parking could be more efficient at pull-offs that are large enough for multiple vehicles if lines would mark off parking spaces.

More parking!!! There are so many places in the Valley that could be utilized for more parking. If Lower and Upper River Campgrounds are never going to reopen as campgrounds, why not use them as parking lots? Why not use the stables as parking lots now that the trail rides are a thing of the past? More bathrooms (it was so nice to finally see a bunch of port-o-potties out by El Cap this year. Use Badger Pass as a day use parking area and have a shuttle take people up to Glacier Point and a shuttle take people down to the Valley. Obviously that runs the risk of people missing the last returning shuttle but oh well. (Maybe they could scan a QR code or something to get a reminder 3, 2 and 1 hour before the last shuttle leaves the Valley that day.) Crane Flat or the snow play area could also be used as day use parking with shuttles down to the Valley.

## Parking Infrastructure Outside the Park

Some commenters opposed more parking infrastructure within the park, but supported parking lots outside of the park, specifically at the entrances. Generally, entrance parking lots could be used in conjunction with shuttle systems to make travel into the park more efficient and convenient. Suggested locations outside of the park included at El Portal, the west end of Yosemite Lodge, and near Mariposa and Oakhurst. Specifically, commenters requested larger parking structures at El Portal.

### *Representative Quotes*

I've always thought a massive parking garage built at Rancheria in El Portal would be a great solution.

Also a large parking lot at the entrance to the valley where trees have already been cut, would reduce the damage from cars parking illegally on the valley floor. Such a parking lots should have expanded shuttle access to the rest of the valley.

A multi story parking structure (not parking lot) either at El Portal or at the intersection of Big Oak Flat Rd and El Portal Rd would with improved higher capacity shuttle buses would radically reduce the number of cars in the valley.

## Lane Creation

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Many commenters encouraged the creation of new lanes, such as bus-only lanes. Bus-only lanes were suggested as a way to avoid traffic queues and travel more efficiently within the park. This could also further incentivize visitors to utilize the shuttle system. However, some commenters disapproved, stating that issues can result if personal vehicles misuse the bus lane. Commenters generally supported the idea, as long as the bus-only lane is created in addition to other lanes and does not replace a lane for other traffic. One commenter specifically suggested one lane for day-use and another lane for reservations and buses for Southside Road.

### *Representative Quotes*

Improve the marking and enforcement of bus lanes, and build or designate new bus lanes everywhere feasible along shuttle routes. This would allow shuttles to run quickly regardless of visitor traffic congestion, making them a more attractive option and reducing visitor car traffic.

If there could be bus only lanes throughout the park, then that would further incentivize people to use the bus. And if the bus was reliable and relatively quick, that could also ease demand on parking.

Using one of the lanes in the Valley for Buses only does not work. It just makes everything more congested because all the autos are now put into just one lane. With reservations and elimination of the bus lanes, there will be no more congestion in the Valley.

South side road: one lane for day use & one lane for those with stay reservations & buses

## Curry Village

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Commenters expressed disapproval of the parking at Curry Village and expressed concern about the lot being partially closed due to construction. Commenters expressed that parking could be more efficient and should be considered for expansion, and that expanding the lot and paving while also painting lines could significantly improve Curry Village.

### *Representative Quotes*

One of the times when we went to Yosemite Valley about a year ago traffic was very slow. All parking entrances were closed with guard attendants. This included the large Curry Village parking area. We could also see vacant parking spots at other locations and the parking guards still not allowing parking. Why? Stop this practice and maximize use of available parking. This practice exacerbates the traffic problem.

Parking lots should all be expanded. There is so much Valley land and so little parking now. When we arrived in June much parking was unnecessarily cordoned off in many areas for construction, or in the case of Curry Village for no obvious reason. There was no signage.

Pave and paint parking lines in the Curry Village and Trailhead lots (and maybe also at White Wolf, May Lake, and other trailhead parking lots that are currently dirt) to encourage more efficient parking. Typically the early arrivals who park when there is a lot of free space park far apart from one another because it's not full, leaving too much wasted space. Paving and parking lines would allow 5% more vehicles to fit in those lots.

## Infrastructure Opposition

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Many commenters opposed new infrastructure specific to road modifications or parking. Commenters felt that adding more capacity to the park would not alleviate congestion, but would add to the existing problem.

### Representative Quotes

Update infrastructure - While limited infrastructure updates can alleviate overcrowding in specific situations, we strongly caution against the mindset that we can feasibly build our way out of this mess. Suggestions to build costly new parking spaces, trails, roads and other manmade structures in less popular areas of the park, or to drastically expand entrance stations and other facilities run the risk of considerably harming natural and cultural resources in the park. Such suggestions also do not address the central problem of overcrowding. Indeed, additional parking and other infrastructure will likely only lead to more and more visitation over time, including in areas of the park not equipped to handle increased guests, further exacerbating the park impacts we are currently seeing.

Please do not build any more parking lots or add any more asphalt. The view from Yosemite Point has changed drastically, and not for the better.

I strongly feel the parking at Bridalveil should be permanently closed. The congestion of cars trying to enter the lot has always been chaotic during busy seasons with the awkward location of the entrance.

The parking at Bridalveil should be permanently closed to prevent congestion from Tunnel View.

### Roadway Infrastructure

Commenters expressed concerns about traffic flow within the park and what could be done to make roadways more efficient. The majority of commenters expressed disapproval of the one-way traffic within the valley, stating that it was easy to get caught in the loop, which only exacerbated traffic queues and congestion. Commenters suggested that adding more lanes for two-way traffic and building connector roads within the valley from north to south would help solve these issues. Commenters also suggested additional roadside parking and turnaround points, especially within the valley. Commenters also suggested re-routing the road to the south of Yosemite Lodge and returning the road to Upper and Lower Pines along north pines back to its original state. Commenters generally supported implementing more roundabouts to improve traffic flows. A few commenters advocated to closing Bridalveil to prevent congestion from tunnel view.

### Representative Quotes

Please consider the impacts of removing roadside parking while not limiting visitors and/or creating equivalent amounts of lot parking. I have seen lots of work in TM to curb and remove roadside parking but there is still no usable shuttle system, and not adequate amounts of lot parking to replace removed spaces. This is super frustrating for a distributed recreational area like Tuolumne. I see huge accessibility issues with this as well as issues for hiking and climbing access. Not all recreation starts from established trailheads and much of Yosemite is without trails. Creating larger shoulders with rocks blocking meadow access for cars is far more attractive and far safer for bicyclists than super high curbs that create issues for winter ops and ice dams/flooding during rain and thunderstorms. We need shoulders so bikers do not die!!!!

The Park Officials have gone out of their way to make parking more problematic than it was before - you people have intentionally removed several hundred viable parking spaces by placing big rocks in the way and by closing off many great parking places like the strait-away by Lower Yosemite Falls. Create anymore parking spaces along Northside and Southside drives with bull dozers if needed. You have committed an outrageous stupid and self-serving act by eliminating FREE public parking at the Ahwahnee Hotel - so the concessionaire brings in lots of money by chareging the public for Valet parking. You stupidly removed a perfectly good parking lot for Yosemite Falls by creating a few picnic tables and made a nightmare of parking in the Lodge parking lot and creating a nightmare at the crosswalk.

In order to circumvent the canyon, build link roads to the north and south of Yosemite Valley to access those northern and southern approaches to the Valley, so traffic can continue there and not go into the valley. Probably build those connectors to meet up with parking areas outside the park or Valley, so they can continue north or south, but not go into the Valley unless by shuttle bus.

The valley loop is effective on the west side of the valley but the often confusing routes that connect Curry Village area, Yosemite Village and Ahwanee area create a lot of congestion. Road improvement in that section would help ease the congestion. The new Day Parking area by the village is great but there are simply not enough parking at Curry Village, Ahwanee area, Cook's Meadow, and the highly visited spots such as Valley View and Tunnel View.

## Infrastructure – Park Facilities

### Additional Campgrounds

Commenters requested additional campgrounds be developed throughout the park, including at previous campground locations no longer in use. Some commenters requested additional hotels and RV campgrounds. Others suggested that RVs and trailers should be barred from parking at traditional campgrounds or from the park entirely. Some commenters also requested additional group camping sites and backpacker-only campgrounds, while others requested existing backpacker campgrounds be open to all visitors.

#### Representative Quotes

Continue to upgrade the campsites. Maybe less in an area so campers are not on top of each other.

The campground should be open to all, not just back country backpackers. Expand the current campground and create a second Campground with ample parking near the Dam.

I have struggled to reserve campsites. I think more campgrounds should be developed or people who are no-shows need consequences that are meaningful for reserving a site and not coming.

Accommodation in the Park is very service manpower intensive (and expensive). Expanding campgrounds back to at least pre- 1997 numbers and an improved reservation system would allow for more users spending multiple days in the park at a fraction of the cost of service personnel.

Yosemite has long been in need of additional lodging, in locations other than the Valley. By providing more lodging options, visitors can arrive in the park and stay there for several days without driving in & out of the park every day. Lodging should be affordable to families of average means, as opposed to the Ahwahnee. More lodging can be created while still maintaining the vast majority of the park as wilderness.

### Employee Housing

Commenters suggested additional, improved employee housing be constructed near their workstations in order to improve employee quality of life and decrease traffic. Others suggested that employee-only areas should be developed away from existing campgrounds. One commenter suggested converting existing hotels and out-of-date facilities to employee housing, such as The Ahwahnee.

### **Representative Quotes**

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|---|
| It doesn't seem like space for employee housing is fully utilized in El Portal.   |
| Take good care of our rangers and park staff. We want them to have good living conditions and amenities. I'm sure those buildings need updating.  |
| Most employees who work in Yosemite Valley should live in Yosemite Valley. An employee shuttle service from El Portal would be a good idea for those employees who live in El Portal. The rest of the Yosemite Valley park employees should have housing in Yosemite Valley. There's no reason for employees to add to the automobile traffic in the Valley with more air pollution and waste of resources. |
| Housing for employees should be a major investment.   |

### **Reduced Infrastructure**

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Commenters noted that adding more infrastructure to popular park areas may result in additional crowding issues and suggested that additional infrastructure should not be a priority for the park. Others suggested that existing infrastructure should be removed, such as the general store and lodge at Tuolumne.

### **Representative Quotes**

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| Reducing infrastructure in Yosemite Valley, not increasing it, could do more to limit the amount of people and congestion. Eliminating concessions and all related infrastructure in the valley, from lodging to restaurants and supermarket, etc. would go a long way towards eliminate crowding. |
| Keep a lot of improved and increased infrastructure to a minimum, and no increased development in currently minimally undeveloped areas (Crane Flat in particular)   |

### **Concessions**

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Commenters suggested increasing the number of concessions and park facilities throughout the park. Specifically, commenters noted the need for additional, more frequently serviced restrooms throughout the park. Commenters also requested additional touchless water fountains, trash receptacles, pay showers, playgrounds, device charging stations, and recycling facilities. Other commenters requested additional food concessions be available throughout the park, such as food stands, restaurants with wait staff, bars, and general stores. Some commenters also emphasized the need for additional efforts to be made toward sustainable, eco-friendly park facilities, including increasing energy efficiency and decreasing water usage, light pollution, and single-use plastic reliance, among others.

### **Representative Quotes**

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|---|
| Improve Concessionaire services, eg hours, quality and volume capacity and not just June-August, especially food services.  |
| Improving facilities' capacity could be a big help to the user experience - as it is now there are few places to eat, for instance  |
| Increase food options and quality outside of the valley floor. This can help decrease traffic in the valley if people have more options to do sit-down and have lunch as an example. Ps - The store by Tuolumne meadow is horrible and has a reputation for selling expired food and beverages. |

There should be vault toilets or the like at every trailhead and at all primary attractions and an adequate janitorial staff to maintain them. NPS needs to make sure it pays a living wage or better to ALL of its employees.

## Infrastructure – Distribution of Visitation

### Additional Access and Improvements to Hetch Hetchy

Commenters suggested that providing additional access and improvements to the Hetch Hetchy Valley would allow for greater distribution of visitors. Some commenters suggested that the park should prioritize restoring Hetch Hetchy to its previous state. Others suggested developing additional sustainable recreation opportunities around the reservoir, such as boat access, shuttle routes, parking spaces, stream side activities, opening campgrounds, and hiking trails.

#### Representative Quotes

1. Open Hetch Hetchy. Make it a significant destination in the park. Develop its hiking trails.

Firstly, opening the campground to all visitors rather than just backpackers - campgrounds in Yosemite Valley are simply unable to meet visitor demand. With some improvement, the Hetch Hetchy campground would become a great alternative for visitors who want to experience camping in Yosemite.

Additionally, improving and expanding the recreational opportunities in Hetch Hetchy will help to disperse crowds throughout the area. Offering new and improved trails will offer reprieve to crowded trails in Yosemite Valley. Allowing non-polluting boating on the reservoir would also offer a new experience to visitors, drawing crowds from other areas of the park.

Offering public transportation to Hetch Hetchy would alleviate any increased crowding to the area that may come with improved access, encouraging visitors to leave their cars behind and finally open up access to Hetch Hetchy for those who already visit Yosemite via public transportation.

Overall, Hetch Hetchy is underutilized and offers solutions to the crowding in Yosemite Valley. Please consider addressing the visitor experience in Hetch Hetchy, as it would have a positive impact on the park as a whole.

Opening the underused Northwest Hetch Hetchy entrance will help relieve pressure on heavily-used areas of the park. The Hetch Hetchy campground should be opened to all visitors, not just backpackers. Minor improvements can be made to the campground and the trail system to allow more use. Allowing non-motorized boating will improve access to the region. Expanding transportation to Hetch Hetchy (through YARTS or the Valley Shuttle or both) will also improve access.

Additionally, improving and expanding the recreational opportunities in Hetch Hetchy will help to disperse crowds throughout the area. Offering new and improved trails will offer reprieve to crowded trails in Yosemite Valley. Allowing non-polluting boating on the reservoir would also offer a new experience to visitors, drawing crowds from other areas of the park.

Offering public transportation to Hetch Hetchy would alleviate any increased crowding to the area that may come with improved access, encouraging visitors to leave their cars behind and finally open up access to Hetch Hetchy for those who already visit Yosemite via public transportation.

Overall, Hetch Hetchy is underutilized and offers solutions to the crowding in Yosemite Valley. Please consider addressing the visitor experience in Hetch Hetchy, as it would have a positive impact on the park as a whole.

### Increase Visitation to Underutilized Park Locations

Commenters advocated for increasing visitation to underutilized areas of the park such as Mariposa Grove, Ackerson Meadow, Foresta, Badger Pass, Big Meadow, Little Nellie Falls, Porcupine Creek,

Lake Eleanor, Crane Flat, Tioga Pass Corridor, Wapama Falls, Rockefeller Grove, Bridalveil Fall, Wawona Pioneer Village, and others. Commenters provided suggestions for methods to increase visitation to these underutilized areas, including additional naturalist opportunities and guided hikes, new trailheads, trail loops, and trail connections, relocated overnight parking, increased group wilderness permit sizes, congestion notifications, reduced entry fees, increased shuttle routes, and improved infrastructure. Commenters noted that extending seasonal access to off-peak seasons and times could also increase visitation to underutilized areas.

**Representative Quotes**

|   |
|---|
| <p>Updating infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updating infrastructure with the intent of supporting a higher number of visitors has a similar set of long term issues as increasing entrance station throughput. Designing systems that support more people will result in more yearly visitors (on top of existing growth).</li> <li>- Dividing a fixed number of visitors over more area in the park however, would result in a lower crowd experience for everyone and a reduced load on highly visited areas of the park.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Enhance and create additional dispersed, accessible visitation areas along primary roadways</p> <p>a. Develop "Foresta Naturalist, Cultural &amp; Interpretive Hub" between Big Oak Flat Road and Foresta community, with regular ranger talks, nature exploration, cultural and historical education, potential tribal cultural center, and other activities for families. Add meaningful parking in intensely burned areas and eventually option to shuttle to Valley. Promote Foresta Falls &amp; Little Nellie Falls options and access</p> <p>b. Define &amp; refine a series of short roadside hikes and nature exploration areas with modest sized finished parking lots and roadside announcement signage to promote these more intimate Yosemite experiences (e.g., short trails to vista points, waterfall hikes, meadow experiences,...), allowing peak season visitors to experience uncrowded areas of the Park - see sample list below</p> |
| <p>Make investments that balance attraction interest and parking between the West and East sides of the Valley. Some sensible suggestions include: expanding the parking lot at Bridalveil Fall, expanding the trails and designated tourist areas along the base of El Capitan.</p>  |
| <p>Make use of the Wawona Pioneer Village to be more like Columbia Historic State Park. More people could be hired to dress up and give tours and information about the area and buildings. Have horse-drawn carriage rides, gold panning, and candle dipping for people to have activities. This would open up Wawona to more activities than hiking and staying at the hotel, and draw on this ample historic resources in that area.</p>   |

**Visitation of Nearby Parks**

Commenters suggested encouraging visitation to other nearby parks through shuttle connections, shared events, and advertisements in surrounding communities.

**Representative Quotes**

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|--|
| <p>Has YNP considered guided hikes, horseriding, or other "activities" in less popular areas as a solution for dispersal?</p> <p>Has YNP considered partnering with other national forests and parks to advertise ALL of the beautiful opportunities in the area and help with dispersion? (possibly even shuttles to connect, partner events, etc.)</p> |
| <p>Work with local communities and other chambers of commerce to advertise and market alternative spots to see, such as forest service lands and state parks.</p>  |

## Opposition to Distribution Around the Park

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Commenters discouraged the park from adding infrastructure or encouraging more visitation at less popular park areas. Some suggested that increased visitation to these areas may negatively impact their character and the quality of visitor experience, similar to how it has been impacted at popular areas like the Valley. Others argued that efforts to more widely disperse visitors are not worth their outcome, as many visitors prefer to visit the most popular areas due to their popularity and uniqueness. Further, efforts should instead be focused on improving infrastructure in those areas instead.

### *Representative Quotes*

This goes for the rest of the high country. It has a carrying capacity, and any attempt to increase visitors, no matter how carefully managed, will unavoidably change the quality of the experience. Give careful consideration to that when deciding what to do.

Regarding improving facilities at lesser used areas, such as Crane Flat & Badger Pass, you don't explain what you hope to accomplish with this, There is a reason why these places are under utilized. They are simply not what people come to see (nice but pretty ordinary compared to the areas that make Yosemite unique). The money and resources would be better spent improving the experience at the most-used parts of the park.

## Assess Distribution Progress

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One commenter suggested that the plan should reassess progress made toward distributing visitors to less popular areas of the park over time. Specifically, as distribution efforts progress, traffic and crowding rates should be analyzed to determine if a revision to the number of reservations available each day can be made. It is assumed that as park visitation spreads out and crowding decreases, the number of visitors each day could increase.

### *Representative Quotes*

Plans to better distribute Yosemite visitor use will be "speculative" as to how much of a difference the provision of alternative destinations may actually make for reducing demand for access to Yosemite Valley or other main iconic destinations, but if the final VAMP plan allows for adjustments in the number of reservations in the following year based on traffic data and assessment of crowding and congestion at current high use destination sites, then better distributing use away from those most popular locations has potential to enable the Park to elevate reservation numbers or other visitor constraints due to the successful dispersal of use to the alternative destinations.

## Infrastructure – Other

### Suggestions for New Park Infrastructure

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Commenters suggested the park install new infrastructure elements, including a larger park entrance sign, designating vista pull-outs for specific use, a kiosk allowing for Tioga Road access, secured storage at trailheads, and ropes or stake barriers to deter out-of-bounds parking. Some commenters generally opposed more infrastructure, expressing concern over the negative environmental impacts that could occur.

### Representative Quotes

It would be cool if there were a larger Yosemite National Park sign at this entrance (like at other flagship parks such as Yellowstone and Sequoia) that visitors could pull off to the side to take pictures with, rather than the tiny roadside sign that there's now. Of course, this might increase traffic congestion, so I don't know how feasible this idea would be.

For backpackers, can we have a place (would pay for) to securely store stuff at popular trailheads that we don't want to carry but would want before shuttling back to the car?

Limit all vista point pullouts to official park buses, park vehicles and vehicles with handicap placards.

Open up the old river campgrounds for parking only  
Replace the foot bridge on the south side of the "hump" bridge going towards the Lodge, the old one disappeared in the '97 flood

## Other Elements

### Tour Buses

Commenters generally felt that tour buses should be limited; however, one commenter requested to increase the fleet of Valley Floor tours (also known as the Green Dragon tours) specifically. One commenter suggested implementing an orientation as part of a tour bus experience. Additionally, it was stated that lower impact travel options (e.g., e-bikes, cargo bikes) and more mobility options (e.g., scooters, strollers, wheelchairs) should be provided by the park.

### Representative Quotes

5. Provide lower impact travel resources (bike, ebike, cargo bike, stroller, wheelchair, and scooter shares, helmets, watercraft).

The biggest problem you will face is how to balance day use by tourist companies and by individuals. My out of the box thinking is manage day use by tours as a concession. Allow so many tour buses per day, set conditions such as use of pollution free buses, hauling their garbage out with them, or whatever makes sense, and then put it out to the highest bidder.

Increase fleet of Green Dragon tours. Guests complaining that they tried to get reservations and couldn't because fully booked.

Consider having an in-person orientation for first-time visitors (maybe include this as part of the tour if you institute morning and afternoon tour buses which only make the one stop in the middle). Make a game out of it, or provide a small reward for completing/understanding the info.

### New Elements to Consider

Commenters provided a variety of factors for the park to consider, including promoting mountain water as an alternative to plastic water bottles in the park; banning dogs within the park; and increasing littering fines. Conversely, one commenter requested restricting access to certain areas of the park, specifically Yosemite Valley.

### **Representative Quotes**

Promotion of using water from the valley floor for drinking, thereby reducing the number of single use plastic water bottles. I never understood why people buy expensive, non-environmental friendly plastic bottled water while there is fresh mountain water available. Just returned from the the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, where the Park Service had a three spigot water dispenser. Behind the spigots was information regarding the source of the water.

As a dog lover+owner I hate to say this, but I think it's time to ban dogs from the park entirely. I see more misbehaving dogs and owners every year, increasingly in the backcountry as well. Besides endangering wildlife and causing problems for rangers, any dog entering the park needs to travel by car and move between parking spots during the day. They wouldn't be able to take public transit in, or use the shuttle system to move around.