

# Glacier National Park Visitor Access and Transportation Planning

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Why are these strategies needed?***

The National Park Service is proud to welcome hundreds of millions of visitors to America's national parks every year. In our second century of protecting these special places, we continue to seek new ways to provide the best experiences possible.

Over the past decade, many parks have seen significant increases in visitation and crowding in popular areas, especially during peak seasons. In some parks, the level of demand is exceeding the capacity for which infrastructure was designed or is outpacing the National Park Service's ability to sustainably support visitation. This trend is resulting in the need to explore new strategies to protect natural and cultural resources and provide opportunities for safe and meaningful visitor experiences.

### ***How did you come up with these strategies?***

These preliminary strategies are the product of many years of studies, public comments, stakeholder input, and analysis and have been informed by data and information collected by Glacier National Park. We also took into consideration formal and informal feedback we received from the public on the pilot programs over the last few years.

### ***How did the pilot reservation systems inform these preliminary strategies?***

In 2023 the park engaged stakeholders, tribes, and the public to receive feedback regarding the three years of pilots. The park is interested to learn from affected communities about what has and what hasn't worked with the managed access programs for the Going-to-the-Sun Road (GTSR) Corridor, North Fork (NF), Many Glacier (MG), and Two Medicine (TM). This input was used to help determine the preliminary strategies out for review.

### ***What about the Going-to-the-Sun Road Management Plan?***

In response to the trend of increased park visitation, stress on infrastructure, and road congestion, the NPS developed the Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor Management Plan, which was completed in 2019. The plan considered managing vehicles in the Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor and included strategies to better manage visitation, such as:

- metering traffic (i.e., one-in, one-out)
- designating parking for day use
- implementing a phased day use parking permit system
- configuring dynamic parking, such as redesignating campground loops for parking during peak use times
- widening approach roads and expanding parking lots
- constructing additional miles of trail and designating heavily trafficked portions for one-way travel
- adding restrooms
- extending operation hours at visitor centers
- providing improved trip planning information

The Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor Management Plan is still being implemented and it notes a reservation system for the corridor may be needed in the future.

***What kind of comments are you looking for?***

We are particularly interested in any new information, questions, or ideas that will improve, augment, or challenge that information and ultimately strengthen the plan to support informed decision-making by the NPS.

***If I get enough people to send in a comment, you'll do what we want, right?***

The public comment period is not a vote. What we are looking at is the substance of the comments, not necessarily the volume.

***What is managed access?***

Managed access is a suite of tools that help pace the timing and volume of visitation into areas to optimize access, ensure quality experiences, and protect resources. Examples of managed access on a park entry scale include the vehicle reservation systems and ticketed entry the park has piloted in recent years. Some examples of managed access strategies have been in place for a long time, including wilderness permits, campground reservations, and even lodging reservations. Managed access and related strategies are not a standalone solution. This public engagement process will carefully evaluate many different tools and techniques that would be most effective to help Glacier improve how visitors get to and experience the park's significant resources and features.

***How have the managed access pilots affected the local economy?***

There are several factors that impact the local tourism economy. These factors are as varied as the aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact to national and international tourism, population and demographic changes in local communities, and the ebb and flow of the national economy and its impact on consumers' willingness to spend. While ensuring health of the local economy is not the mission of the National Park Service, the well-being of park neighbors, communities, and businesses is of great concern. We are interested in ideas that provide great access and visitor opportunity while achieving desired conditions in the park and supporting local economies and communities.