National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton National Park
Wyoming

Case Study:

Transportation Plan
Environmental Impact Statement

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**Summary**
The Grant Teton National Park transportation plan is a critical effort to manage one of most impactful activities occurring within the park: vehicular usage. The associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzes myriad categories of impacts ranging from traffic’s effect on wildlife and plant health to air and water quality in the vicinity of roads. For the purpose of this case study, the main focus of the impact will be on transportation system functionality, congestion and the ability of visitors to be able to access and experience the park’s natural value.

The park comprises a number of key attraction points, popular thoroughfares and connecting corridors. The National Park Service sought the solution with the most viable net benefits as analyzed through the following frame:

- Reducing congestion
- Developing better movement throughout the park by appropriately balancing motorized and non-motorized travel
- Educating visitors of the impact of vehicular traffic and promoting more diverse transportation use

The alternative that was ultimately selected provides a wider range of transportation opportunities for non-motorized travel (bicyclists and pedestrians) through the construction and promotion of multi-use pathways and dedicated bicycle lanes.

**Project Description**
With regards to Grand Teton National Park, the National Park Service is charged with “the preservation and protection of the Teton Range and its surrounding landscapes, ecosystems, and cultural and historic resources.”

**Project Facts**

**Agency Involvement:**
National Park Service (NPS)
U.S. Department of the Interior

**Chronology:**
April 2000: NPS undertakes basic transportation study in Grand Teton National Park
September 2001: Transportation planning sessions initiated, public hearings commence shortly thereafter
2004: Decision is made to scale back plan in order to focus on achievable goals within 5-10 years
May 2005: Draft Plan/EIS released
August 2005: Public comment period ends
September 2006: Final EIS released
This principle governs decision making as the agency develops areas and services in the park to accommodate visitors. Accordingly, the traffic-related impact described in the callout box above ultimately drives decisions involving road construction, multi-use (bike and pedestrian) path construction, key building infrastructure such as visitor centers and commercial outlets, and parking space expansion.

Grand Teton National Park typically sees the following types of motorized and non-motorized traffic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motorized</th>
<th>Non-motorized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passenger cars and trucks</td>
<td>Bicyclists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational vehicles (RVs)</td>
<td>Pedestrians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Motorcycles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial vehicles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Grand Teton National Park transportation study, EIS and associated construction projects sought to strike a balance between the varying and fundamentally different traffic types. The decision had almost immediate consequences due to the incentives it would create for visitors who travelled to Wyoming to visit the park.

**Alternatives**

Four alternatives are presented in the EIS, and there are a number of elements common to each alternative. They are as follows:
• Currently constructed roadways will be maintained and improved as warranted and an adaptive management plan will be used for the Moose-Wilson Road section of the park.
• A study will be undertaken to examine the viability of a transit business within the park.
• The National Park Service will improve roadway signage to better accommodate non-motorized traffic and increased pressure on wildlife.
• Some key parking areas will be reconfigured.

The four alternatives range from a very motorized vehicle-focused plan that resembles the current situation to a plan that would shift the visitor experience significantly toward non-motorized access and set the stage for future focus on non-motorized experiences within the park.

**Alternative 1 – No Action**
This is the straightforward, baseline option. It neither further encourages nor discourages alternatives to motorized vehicle use, thought it does nothing to confront the larger impact of traffic associated with increased visitors to the park. Estimated capital costs for implementing Alternative 1 are $361,000 and maintenance costs are zero.

**Alternative 2 – Road Shoulder Improvement**
In an attempt to manage the traffic flow, parking, and visitor experience within the Park, this alternative has two components: 1) increased education and information dissemination regarding transit facilities and travel conditions and 2) widening of many road shoulders across the park to provide better access for bicyclists and pedestrians. The estimated capital costs are $12,958,000 with annual maintenance and operation costs of $63,000.
Alternative 3 – Road Shoulder Improvement and Multi-Use Pathways

This alternative comprises the same components of Alternative 2 and also adds a network of multi-use pathways totaling 23.3 miles. The pathways would be designed within the framework of the current road system (paths would be within 50-150 feet of roadways) and would include some minor parking infrastructure/signage updates to accommodate greater non-motorized traffic. Estimated capital costs are $34,542,000 with annual maintenance and operation costs of $417,000.

Alternative 4 – Extensive Multi-Use Pathways

42.6 miles of multi-use pathways would be constructed under this alternative, offering bicyclists and pedestrians tremendous travel opportunities outside the road corridor. Estimated capital costs are $47,788,000 with annual maintenance and operation costs of $558,000.

Decision

The National Park Service decided to pursue a variation of Alternative 3 (titled “3A”) that included additional multi-use pathways within the road corridor. The pathways will almost add up to the 42.6 miles outlines in Alternative 4, but approximately 19 of the miles of pathways will be placed within the road corridor rather than fully separated. The plan also includes provisions for spur paths to major visitor destinations within the park. Estimated capital costs are $45,019,000 with annual maintenance and operation costs of $558,000.

Mitigation

The National Park Service adopted a number of mitigation measures along with Alternative 3a. They include:

- Implementation of Best management practices (BMPs) during construction
- Instituting a comprehensive monitoring program focusing on pathway users, pathway surfaces, wildlife and vegetation
- Phasing the project over five separate sections to conduct reviews along the course of the project
Alternative 3a - Preferred Alternative

Compliance completed in 2002 for a 5-foot wide road shoulder improvement from Lizard Creek to the Yellowstone NP boundary.

Planned Pathways:
- Planned/Existing County Pathway
- Multi-Use Pathway (inside road corridor)
- Multi-Use Pathway (outside road corridor)
- New Road Alignment

Potential Future Action *
- Improved Road Shoulder

Road Types:
- Heavy-duty
- Medium-duty
- Light-duty
- Unpaved dirt

Additional Features:
- Airport
- Campground
- Entrance
- Picnic Area
- Visitor Center

*Compliance credits included in Narrative.
Bibliography

