

Washington, DC Visitor Transportation Study For the National Mall and Surrounding Park Areas

Finding of No Significant Impact

Purpose and Need

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared a study evaluating alternative approaches for visitor transportation in and around The National Mall in Washington, D.C. and within Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA. The Secretary of the Interior, through the Director of the National Park Service, has the exclusive right to provide interpretive transportation services for The National Mall and other national park sites in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area. The purpose of this project is to plan for a convenient, well-connected interpretive visitor transportation service to national park sites in the D.C. area. This service will protect national park resources and ensure high-quality visitor experiences by offering a sustainable, educational, integrated, and affordable transportation network for visitors.

The planning study is needed to develop a range of convenient services that may be offered in the future for visitor transportation on The National Mall and within downtown park sites and Arlington National Cemetery. Many visitor travel options, access, and connections between existing transportation systems are located too far apart, or are not consistently integrated or linked. Anticipated population growth in Metropolitan Washington will increase congestion on the existing transportation infrastructure. The existing number of private vehicle parking spaces in downtown Washington, D.C. is insufficient. For example, within the National Mall & Memorial Parks there are roughly 1,200 spaces for private vehicles, and an estimated 22,000 visitors arriving by car on any average day. In addition, the increasing use of personal transportation vehicles, such as Segway® Human Transporters (HTs) and electric scooters, requires careful planning. Any NPS transportation services should coordinate with long-term planning goals for visitor services in Washington, D.C.

Selected Action

The National Park Service developed a range of alternatives based upon public comment, initial project scoping, and the goal of developing a range of convenient transportation services coordinated with long-term planning for Washington, D.C. Alternative 2, the preferred alternative, with some small modifications is the NPS' selected action. The preferred alternative best meets the stated purpose of the project by providing convenient two-way transportation service, maximizing interconnection points, providing choices in level of interpretation and expanding service to a greater number of desired visitor destinations. Additionally, the selected action provides expanded opportunities for use of Segway® HTs and electric scooters. The two small modifications to Alternative 2 are included in the description below. Neither modification will substantively change the level of environmental impact. Throughout the pages that follow, "Alternative 2" or "the preferred alternative" includes the action described below, including the two modifications:

Preferred Alternative – Alternative 2, with minor modifications:

- Two new interconnected routes will be provided in the visitor core. Service in Arlington National Cemetery will be extended to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial. Selected excursion tours will continue to be offered, potentially including cultural and visitor sites

outside the visitor core area as warranted by market conditions. Access will be provided to 39 of the top visitor destinations in the Washington, D.C., area. New transit stops will be located within easy walking access of Metrorail stations.

- Basic orientation will be provided on the new routes via drivers, maps and brochures, and users will have a choice of additional recorded educational / interpretive services on all routes and supplemental transportation services.
- Optional interpretation would be provided by audio/electronic information systems via a range of potential methods including, handheld personal audio devices (such as an MP3 player), via general broadcast, or via headphone plug-ins at each seat. Such methods would allow for the potential for visitors to select tailored messages, such as children's oriented interpretation and multi-lingual options.
- Vehicles, interpretive materials, such as open caption for audio/electronic interpretation, and supporting facilities would be universally accessible per federal law and NPS policy.
- Some parking under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service within the National Mall & Memorial Parks may be metered to support transit operations, encourage greater use of transit services and be consistent with regional transportation policies.
- Additional designated access will be allowed for Segway® HTs and electric scooters along the existing multi-use trail system in the National Mall & Memorial Parks.
- Two small modifications have been made to Alternative 2 since the completion of the public review of the environmental assessment (EA). Neither of these modifications will change the level of environmental impact. First, based on public comment and evaluation of adjacent land management policies, use of Segway® HTs (or other personal mobility devices) will also be allowed in approved recreational Segway® areas on sidewalks along Pennsylvania Avenue from 3rd to 15th Streets NW, including Freedom Plaza and on sidewalks along Ohio Drive SW between East Basin Drive and the entrance of East Potomac Golf Course. Second, consistent with the laws and regulations of most adjacent jurisdictions, helmets and pedestrian warning devices will not be required by the NPS distinct from local jurisdictional requirements for users of Segway® HTs, electric mobility-aid scooters, bicycles, or other such personal transportation devices.
- All provision of personal transportation vehicles, such as Segways or bicycles, for recreational use would continue to occur off park land, except for rentals of bicycles, canoes, and kayaks at the Thompson Boat Center in Rock Creek Park.

Alternatives Considered

The environmental assessment also analyzed four other alternatives, including a no action alternative.

Alternative 1 (no action): Current bus transit routes, which are focused on guided sightseeing, would remain under Alternative 1. New vehicles would be used on the existing bus transit routes. There would be no changes to multimodal access regulations or any additional travel demand management actions.

- A single one-way route in the visitor core would continue to be offered, plus service to Arlington National Cemetery, and supplemental service in the form of selected excursion tours (Mount Vernon, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, and Twilight Tours). Access would continue to be provided to 28 of the top visitor destinations in the metropolitan area.

- Narrated shuttle bus tours would continue to be provided to a visitor market that seeks in-depth educational / interpretive opportunities, meeting transportation needs throughout the visitor core and selected outlying visitor destinations.
- No actions would be taken to manage travel demand, such as changes to parking policy.
- Multi-use trails would continue to provide access for currently allowed uses. Pedestrians and bicycles would have continued access on all multimodal trails within national park system areas. Persons with disabilities would continue to use Segway® HTs and electric scooters throughout the National Mall & Memorial Parks. No policy changes would be made for the recreational use of Segway® HTs and electric scooters on park multiuse trails. Both would have continued recreational access on NPS sidewalks adjacent to roadways maintained by the District of Columbia, including sidewalks crossing the National Mall along 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 14th Streets NW/SW.
- All commercial rentals of personal transportation vehicles, such as Segways or bicycles, for recreational use would continue to occur off park land, except for rentals of bicycles, canoes, and kayaks at the Thompson Boat Center in Rock Creek Park.

Alternative 2 (original): As detailed above, a slightly modified Alternative 2 is the NPS preferred alternative. Alternative 2 without the modifications is described below.

- Two new interconnected routes will be provided in the visitor core. Service in Arlington National Cemetery will be extended to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial. Selected excursion tours will continue to be offered, potentially including cultural and visitor sites outside the visitor core area as warranted by market conditions. Access will be provided to 39 of the top visitor destinations in the Washington, D.C., area. New transit stops will be located within easy walking access of Metrorail stations.
- Basic orientation will be provided on the new routes via drivers, maps and brochures, and users will have a choice of additional recorded educational / interpretive services on all routes and supplemental transportation services.
- Optional interpretation would be provided by audio/electronic information systems via a range of potential methods including, handheld personal audio devices (such as an MP3 player), via general broadcast, or via headphone plug-ins at each seat. Such methods would allow for the potential for visitors to select tailored messages, such as children's oriented interpretation and multi-lingual options.
- Vehicles, interpretive materials, such as open caption for audio/electronic interpretation, and supporting facilities would be universally accessible per federal law and NPS policy.
- Some parking under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service within the National Mall & Memorial Parks may be metered to support transit operations, encourage greater use of transit services and be consistent with regional transportation policies.
- Additional designated access will be allowed for Segway® HTs and electric scooters along the existing multi-use trail system in the National Mall & Memorial Parks.
- All provision of personal transportation vehicles, such as Segways or bicycles, for recreational use would continue to occur off park land, except for rentals of bicycles, canoes, and kayaks at the Thompson Boat Center in Rock Creek Park.

Alternative 3: A ride-and-learn visitor transportation service would be provided, more focus on providing a sightseeing and interpretive experience than on convenient transportation service.

- Three interconnected, one-way routes would be provided in the visitor core, covering a larger service area than in Alternative 1, but not providing the convenience of two-way service as in the Selected Action. The Arlington National Cemetery service would be extended to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial. Excursion tours would be provided as warranted by market conditions. Access would be provided to 42 of the top visitor destinations in the Washington area.
- In-depth and flexible learning experiences would be emphasized and provided via a range of potential methods including, handheld personal audio devices, general broadcast or plug-in headsets.
- No additional actions would be taken to manage travel demand, and access policies for the recreational use of Segway® HTs or electric scooters would not change under this alternative. The Segways® and scooters would have continued recreational access on NPS sidewalks adjacent to roadways maintained by the District of Columbia, including sidewalks crossing the National Mall along 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 14th Streets NW/SW.
- All commercial rentals of personal transportation vehicles, such as Segways or bicycles, for recreational use would continue to occur off park land, except for rentals of bicycles, canoes, and kayaks at the Thompson Boat Center in Rock Creek Park.

Alternative 4: A coordinated system of easy-to-use bus transportation would be provided, designed to maximize views while conveniently meeting the needs for frequent service between visitor sites.

- Three interconnected, two-way routes would be offered in the visitor core, covering a larger service area than Alternative 1. The Arlington National Cemetery service would be extended to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial. Two supplemental transportation services (an introductory tour plus excursion tours) would be provided as warranted by market demand. Access would be provided to 43 of the top visitor destinations, and optional excursion routes could provide access to two additional sites, for a total of 45 sites.
- Orientation and interpretation would be provided by drivers and audio/electronic information systems via a range of potential methods including, handheld personal audio devices (such as an MP3 player), via general broadcast, or via headphone plug-ins at each seat. Such methods would allow for the potential for visitors to select tailored messages, such as children's oriented interpretation and multi-lingual options.
- Approximately 400 public parking spaces on Madison Drive NW and Jefferson Drive SW would be eliminated, and these roadways would be closed to private vehicle access, with access only for disabled visitor parking and for transit and delivery vehicles. The recreational use of Segway® HTs and electric scooters would be allowed on all park trails within the National Mall & Memorial Parks. No additional actions to manage travel demand would be taken.
- All commercial rentals of personal transportation vehicles, such as Segways or bicycles, for recreational use would continue to occur off park land, except for rentals of bicycles, canoes, and kayaks at the Thompson Boat Center in Rock Creek Park.

Alternative 5: Frequent bus transit service would be provided to meet the transportation needs of visitors, local residents, and workers in central Washington, D.C. This alternative is considered in accordance with the previously developed District of Columbia Downtown Circulator Implementation Plan (NCPC/ DDOT/DBID/WMATA 2003).

- Two interconnected routes would be provided in the visitor core (the phase two routes of the Downtown Circulator). Some refinement of this concept would be required to fully meet NPS

goals. It is assumed that the two phase one routes (K Street NW and 7th Street NW/SW) would continue under Alternative 5. No Arlington National Cemetery service would be provided. Access would be provided to 34 of the top visitor destinations in the Washington metropolitan area.

- No orientation or interpretation would be provided.
- No changes to multimodal access or any additional travel demand management actions are proposed. Pedestrians and bicycles would have continued access on all multimodal trails within national park system areas. Persons with disabilities would have continued access to use of Segway® HTs and electric scooters throughout the National Mall & Memorial Parks. No policy changes would be made for the recreational use of Segway® HTs and electric scooters on park multiuse trails. They would have continued recreational access on NPS sidewalks adjacent to roadways maintained by the District of Columbia, including sidewalks crossing the National Mall along 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 14th Streets NW/SW.
- All commercial rentals of personal transportation vehicles, such as Segways or bicycles, for recreational use would continue to occur off park land, except for rentals of bicycles, canoes, and kayaks at the Thompson Boat Center in Rock Creek Park.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Director's Order #12, the National Park Service is required to identify the environmentally preferred alternative (NPS Management Policies 2006). The Council on Environmental Quality defines the environmentally preferred alternative as "the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in the NEPA's Section 101" (CEQ 1981). Section 101(b) of NEPA states that it is the continuing responsibility of federal agencies to:

1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
4. preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
5. achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

After careful review of potential resource and visitor impacts to natural and cultural resources, the preferred alternative (Alternative 2), is the environmentally preferred alternative. Alternative 2 is the environmentally preferred because it will best meet goals 2, 3, and 6, while also meeting goals 1, 4, and 5. The promotion of alternative transportation, multi-modal connections, the use of clean fuels, and the expansion of service to additional destinations previously unavailable via visitor transit will help fulfill the National Park Service's responsibility as a trustee of the environment (goal 1). Providing a safer and more accessible visitor transportation service and regulating Segway® HTs and electric scooters on designated routes will contribute to a healthful environment for the public (goal 2).

Alternative 2 will attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable consequences (goal 3) because of its appeal to a broader visitor market, and because it serves both NPS and non-NPS sites frequented by visitors, such as Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and Arlington National Cemetery. It provides a choice of educational / interpretive opportunities, improved opportunities for bicyclists, and new transportation mode choices and connections. The visitor transportation service will provide a choice of educational / interpretive programs and will serve new sites along George Washington Memorial Parkway as well as more downtown National Mall & Memorial Parks sites, thus maintaining an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice (goal 4). By providing access to more visitor destinations of high demand, including the U.S. Marine Corps. War Memorial, along with visitor markets and Metrorail stations, Alternative 2 will promote a wide sharing of life's amenities (goal 5). Alternative 2 will also enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources because transit vehicles will use clean fuels and metered parking could encourage greater transit use (goal 6).

Alternative 1 is not the environmentally preferred alternative because it would not fully meet all the NEPA goals. It would not address safe Segway® HT and electric scooter access, thus not assuring a safe public environment (goal 2). Alternative 1 would not provide a full array of educational/interpretive opportunities (goal3) and would not support diversity and variety of individual choice (goal 4). It would provide only limited access to visitor destinations, park resources, and Metrorail connections (goal 5).

Alternative 3 is not the environmentally preferred alternative because it would not fully assure a safe public environment. Safety issues created by inconsistent regional policies for Segway® HT and electric scooter users would not be addressed (goal 2). Alternative 3 would only partially attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without undesirable consequences (goal 3). Alternative 3 would only partially support diversity and a variety of individual choice, because a choice of education would not be provided (goal 4).

Alternative 4 is not the environmentally preferred alternative because it would not fully assure a safe public environment (goal 2). Additionally, under Alternative 4 recreational Segway® HT and electric scooter access on all park multi-use trails could create more safety conflicts with pedestrians.

Alternative 5 is not the environmentally preferred alternative because it would not fully assure a safe public environment. Safety issues created by inconsistent regional policies for Segway® HT and electric scooter access would not be addressed (goal 2). Alternative 5 would only partially attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable consequences (goal 3) because Arlington National Cemetery service and supplemental visitor transportation services would not be provided. Alternative 5 would not maintain an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice (goal 4) because there would be no educational component with the visitor transportation service, no Arlington National Cemetery service, and no access to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial.

Mitigation

All mitigation measures are incorporated into the alternatives. No additional mitigations are proposed.

Why the Selected Action Will Not Have a Significant Effect on the Human Environment

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria.

Impacts that may have both beneficial and adverse aspects and which on balance may be beneficial, but that may still have significant adverse impacts which require analysis in an EIS:

No major adverse or beneficial impacts were identified that require analysis in an environmental impact statement. The foreseen projected adverse impacts of the selected action will be no greater than negligible on transportation, on public health, safety, and security, and on energy requirements. No impacts are anticipated on park operations and visitor transportation service operations, cultural resources, natural resources, soundscapes, viewsheds, or environmental justice. Only beneficial impacts of less than significant intensity are anticipated on visitor and user experience, on the socioeconomic environment, and on air quality.

Degree of effect on public health or safety: The selected action will have a minor, long-term adverse impact on public health and safety, because recreational Segway® HT use and electric scooters will be allowed on select multi-use park trails, including Pennsylvania Avenue. Expanding access for additional means of transportation will inherently increase the complexity of the space. While this expansion will have minor adverse public health and safety impacts, these minor impacts are weighed against the benefits of expanded public access created by this change.

The selected action will have a beneficial impact on public health and safety, because all new transit vehicles will be accessible to people with physical disabilities, an improvement over the current NPS-directed on-call system. All new transit vehicles will meet all current safety and security standards, including easy and safe features for entering and exiting, and visible storage areas. Safety and security programs will be part of any contract for operating the visitor transportation service.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:

Historic structures and cultural landscapes surround and are an integral part of the existing urban paved road network. The selected action will not change this setting or the paved road network, and will have no effect on historic structures or cultural landscapes. Park staff have identified no archeological resources, ethnographic resources, or Indian Trust resources or sacred sites within the area of potential affect. The National Mall does not include prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial: There were no highly controversial effects identified during either preparation of the EA or the public review period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks: There were no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks identified during preparation of the EA or the public review period.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for further actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration: The selected action neither

establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts: No cumulatively significant impacts were identified. Cumulative impacts were determined by combining the impacts of the selected action with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. In the project area, actions that may have the potential to cumulatively impact resources include: plans and projects for the regional transportation system (including Metro and local and regional transportation service providers); the implementation of the NPS National Mall Plan; the National Capital Planning Commission's Comprehensive National Capital Plan: Federal Elements; the DC Department of Transportation's annual Transportation Improvement Plan projects; and the redevelopment of areas in downtown D.C. and Arlington, VA.

The new safer transit vehicles, upgraded transit stops and related facilities and services, and safety and security programs provided for in the selected action will have long-term, beneficial, but less than cumulatively significant, impacts on transportation, visitor and transit user experience, public health, safety, and security, and park operations and the socioeconomic environment.

The selected action will contribute beneficial, but less than cumulatively significant, impacts to transportation by supplementing, supporting, and integrating with the existing regional transportation network. Visitor and transit user experiences will benefit from better access to public transit and visitor destinations, expanded visitor orientation and interpretation options (such as multi-lingual and other tailored options), a visitor transportation service integrated with other regional transit systems, and a joint ticketing system. Beneficial impacts to public health, safety, and security will come from improvements in overall safety and security in the regional transportation system, and improvements in vehicle and facility standards offering better access for people with disabilities. The selected action will support downtown revitalization and redevelopment projects by providing more opportunities for employment and spending in various regional economic sectors, providing beneficial impacts to the socioeconomic environment.

There would be no additional cumulative impacts to park operations and visitor transportation service operations associated with the implementation of other park and regional plans. None of the plans or projects listed in the cumulative impact scenario, or any other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions, would have a cumulative effect on park operations or visitor transportation service operations.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources: The selected action will not adversely affect any properties or objects listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It will not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources. The NPS received concurrence that this project will have no effect on historic properties from the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) via signed letter of December 6, 2005.

The NPS sent a letter on May 10, 2006 to the Virginia SHPO to consult on potential impacts on historic and cultural resources. On July 11, 2006 (after 60 days) the SHPO indicated by e-mail their concurrence with the selected action and indicated that the environmental assessment did not describe

effects that might place the project in the category of “undertaking” in regards to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Virginia SHPO did not submit any additional or formal response.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat: No threatened or endangered species, species of concern, designated critical habitats, or ecologically critical areas are listed for the study area. Urban wildlife species within the project area are typically limited to those that have adjusted to human activity, and there would be no additional impacts under the alternatives considered.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection laws: The selected action (preferred alternative) violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Impairment of Park Resources or Values

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the National Park Service has determined that implementation of the selected action will not constitute an impairment of the parks’ resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the impacts described in the environmental assessment, the public comments received and the professional judgment of the decision-makers in accordance with the NPS Management Policies, 2006. As described in the environmental assessment, implementation of the selected action will not result in major adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the parks’ establishment; (2) key to natural or cultural integrity of the parks or to opportunities for enjoyment of the parks; or (3) identified as a goal in the parks’ management plans or other relevant National Park Service planning documents.

Public Involvement

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Park Service conducted public scoping to allow citizens and public agencies to identify issues that should be addressed in the document, including alternatives, potential impacts, and suggested mitigation measures.

The National Park Service initiated public scoping in March 2002, meeting with public agencies that have a role in visitor transportation services in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. A visitor survey was conducted during the spring and summer of 2003 for what is now the National Mall & Memorial Parks, and the results were published as the Washington, D.C. Visitor Transportation Survey (NPS 2003).

In January 2004 the National Park Service distributed the first visitor transportation service newsletter to the public. A comment response form asked for feedback about study goals, future services, some of the transportation options used in other communities, and what approaches to visitor transportation were important to consider and explore.

Four public meetings were held in February 2004, two in the District of Columbia and two in Arlington, VA. The meetings gathered public feedback about the scope of the project and the development of alternative concepts.

In September 2004 a second newsletter summarized public feedback, presented the range of preliminary alternatives, and explained the process by which public input would be considered as alternatives were further refined. In December 2004 the National Park Service held one additional public meeting to share further details on the decision-making process for developing a preferred alternative.

Public comments were received by means of formal letters from federal, state, and local agencies, from organizations, and from individuals; newsletter comment forms; and e-mails from interested groups or individuals.

The EA was made available for public review and comment from November 17, 2006 to January 5, 2007. An NPS press release and e-mail to project stakeholders announcing the document's availability for public comment and planned public meeting was issued on November 20, 2006. The NPS also sent 23 copies of the EA to various Federal, State, local, and civic organizations for their review and comment. Copies of the EA were also available for review on the NPS public internet site <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>, and at the National Mall & Memorial Parks headquarters. On December 6, 2006 the NPS held a public meeting to present the document, answer questions and provide opportunity for public comment. As of the end of the public review period on January 5, 2007, the NPS received 246 comments including correspondence from 16 public agencies, private tour companies and public advocacy groups with comments on the EA. NPS has addressed the comments that required a response, and included those responses as an attachment to this FONSI.

Why the EA remains current despite three-year delay

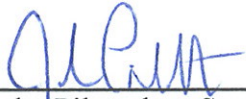
Although three years has passed since the public review period closed on January 5, 2007, the EA remains current. No significant changes have occurred on the National Mall or the transit routes surrounding the National Mall that would alter any of the initial EA findings. Subsequently, the NPS has no reason to anticipate any new public concerns or comments since the public comment period closed in 2007. All alternatives examined in the course of this assessment remain the same. The preferred alternative was modified slightly, as mentioned previously in this document, in response to public comment, but remains untouched since those initial changes were made following the end of the public comment phase in January of 2007.

Conclusion

The selected action (preferred alternative and its modifications), under this Finding of No Significant Impact, does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement. The selected action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Adverse environmental impacts that could occur are negligible to minor in intensity. Mitigation measures will be incorporated into the selected action to reduce or eliminate impacts. There are no significant adverse impacts to public health, public safety; threatened or endangered species; unique characteristics of the geographic area; or archeological, historical or cultural resources. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

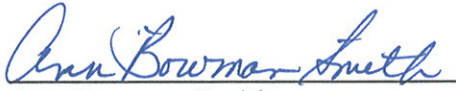
Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared. This is a finding of no significant impact.

Recommended:




John Piltzecker, Superintendent
National Mall and Memorial Parks

1/25/10
Date



Ann Bowman Smith
NPS Liaison to the White House

1/26/2010
Date




Dottie Marshall, Superintendent
George Washington Memorial Parkway

1/25/10
Date



Alex Romero, Acting Superintendent
National Capital Parks-East

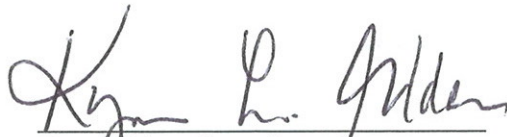
1/25/2010
Date



Cynthia Cox, Acting Superintendent
Rock Creek Park


1/25/10
Date

Recommended:



Kym Elder, Superintendent
Ford's Theatre NHS

1/25/2010
Date



Steve LeBel, (Acting) Associate
Regional Director, Operations and Education
National Capital Region

1/25/10
Date



Peter May, Associate Regional Director,
Lands, Resources and Planning

1/25/10
Date

National Capital Region

Approved:

Peggy O'Dell
Peggy O'Dell, Regional Director
National Capital Region

2-5-10
Date

Responses to Selected Comments

The Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA) and many of its individual members submitted comments to the National Park Service. Excerpts from the December 19, 2006 letter of comment received by the National Park Service from WABA are shown below:

Comment:

Among our recommendations were to update the 1991 Paved Recreational Trails of the National Capital Region study, improve way-finding, directional and informational signage, improve the surface and the connectivity of existing trails, and to add bike parking to all Mall destinations. ... While we are pleased that improved bike parking is recommended as part of all the alternatives, we are extremely discouraged that there is nothing else proposed that would encourage safe bicycle access to the Mall and area parks...

Another study goal is to create "a transportation system that supplements, supports and is integrated with the existing transportation network and that maximizes direct and convenient connections to mass transit." Both the National Capital Planning Commission's Comprehensive Plan: Federal Elements, and the District of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan regard bicycling is an integral part of the regional transportation network that should be encouraged, yet the EA does not address what will be done to promote the overall goals of these important policy documents...

While signed routes are proposed for the limited number of Segway® users, no such amenities are offered for cyclists. According to a recent study, one in three households own a bicycle in DC and there are over 20,000 bike trips made in the Washington region each day. Information signage and kiosks currently offer no information about the location of existing trails, the location of convenient bicycle parking, or about safety tips for cyclists. Maps of the National Mall area should be updated to include internal bike route and trail information as well as information on safe bike routes on city streets not under NPS control. Such maps should be made readily available to the public in both printed and electronic form.

Response:

The National Park Service acknowledges that the Environmental Assessment focused more heavily on visitor transit services than on a broader range of transportation modes, including cycling. The initial intent and scope of the Washington, DC Visitor Transportation Plan for the National Mall and Surrounding Park Areas was to evaluate future visitor interpretive transit service needs prior to the end of the existing third-party operated contract for such services; however, during the scoping period comments were received regarding personal transportation modes, including bicycles, Segways® and electric scooters.

The National Park Service strove to respond to these comments to the extent possible while remaining within the scope and budget of the project by focusing on the need to address new policy for emerging uses, as well as ensure that any proposal for visitor transit would support multi-modal needs, such as the provision of bicycle racks on any future transit vehicles. It was not within the scope of this project to update National Park Service plans for region-wide trail needs.

The National Park Service is in agreement that any development of trail signs, maps, brochures or web materials will include all trails and user guidelines. Currently, there are no user restrictions associated with park sidewalks/multi-use trails for any user other than for Segways® and electric scooters. The National Park Service is working with regional and national trail partners to incorporate trail signage for the Anacostia Waterfront Trail, East Coast Greenway and other District of Columbia wayfinding sign plans.

Comment:

Many comments were received from individuals who use the Segway® as a mobility assistive device or as a means to commute to work expressing a belief that the National Park Service is proposing a “ban” on Segways® or proposing to limit commercial use of Segways®.

Response:

When used as a mobility assistive device, Segways® or electric scooters are permitted throughout the National Mall & Memorial Parks, including all facilities, sidewalks and trails. There is no proposal to change this policy. For the purposes of the EA only, all other uses of these devices are termed “recreational;” however, it is understood that for some individuals a Segway® may be the primary mode of transportation.

The EA does not include any proposals which segment Segway® use by private vs. commercial. Existing Federal regulations and policy regarding commercial uses on national park land apply to any commercial operator, regardless of mode or service. The EA does not include proposals to restrict specifically commercial use of the Segway®.

Rather, the National Park Service has proposed expanding “recreational” use of the Segway® within the National Mall to either designated routes (selected action) or fully on all park sidewalks/multi-use trails.

Comment:

Many cyclists commented that undue levels of attention were given to Segway®/electric scooters within the EA over bicycling needs.

Response:

The Segway® is an emerging technology which does not easily fit within existing federal policies or definitions. In fact, no Federal agency has established a firm definition for a Segway®, instead, many states have enacted “enabling legislation” which allows or requires county/local governments to establish a definition and policy for the treatment of Segway® among other transportation modes. Given the high level of demand in the downtown Washington, DC area for Segway® tours and a growing community of Segway® owners, it is incumbent upon the National Mall & Memorial Parks to address this new technology and determine if safe and appropriate access can be established.

The National Park Service recognizes that many improvements may be needed to better serve all trail users; however, the policy of universal access has already been established for cyclists within the National Mall & Memorial Parks.

Comment:

There is existing research available regarding Segway® use and the National Park Service was mistaken to assert that such research is/was limited.

Response:

A number of studies of Segway® operating characteristics and safety by transportation agencies within the United States, Canada and Germany, among others, have been conducted. Some of this research was available during the alternatives evaluation period of the EA; however, much of this was limited to operational characteristics in isolated or limited trial settings rather than within “real world” settings comparable to the National Mall. As the technology matures and new studies become available, the National Mall & Memorial Parks will continue to evaluate its policies appropriately.

Comment:

Desire to combine the service aspects of transit Alternatives 2 and 5 was expressed, including route combinations, options for pay-per-ride ticketing and choice in levels of interpretation.

Response:

The selection of the preferred alternative does not preclude some route or stop modifications or potential for pay-per-ride options. NPS has identified the desire to making ticketing options as seamless as possible for the visitor through the integration of SmarTrip® card with future services. This technology could provide a great deal of flexibility for ticketing options.

Comment:

Desire to implement “future route expansions” for the Arlington National Cemetery Route concurrently with any new service in this area was expressed.

Response:

Any potential extension of future services to new and planned destinations surrounding Arlington National Cemetery will be based on market demand and necessary inter-agency cooperation. These route options were shown as “future route extension” in part because these destinations were not yet operational during the analysis period of the EA, and in part because these extensions would require further inter-agency coordination to serve areas not historically served by the NPS or its agents.