



Active Transportation

FEDERAL LANDS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Traveling to or exploring national parks by foot, bicycle, or other non-motorized modes allows visitors to experience natural, cultural, and historical places in new ways. Active transportation infrastructure and programs offer benefits to parks and surrounding communities, including lowering vehicle congestion, promoting resource protection, supporting economic development, and accommodating current and increased visitation by providing alternatives to driving.



Bicycle and pedestrian trail at Grand Canyon National Park (Photo credit: Sarah Neal for Bright Angel Bicycles).

The National Park Service (NPS) Active Transportation Guidebook is a resource for parks and gateway communities interested in encouraging and promoting walking and bicycling both to and within national parks. The Active Transportation Guidebook includes best practice examples, lessons-learned, and key considerations for developing active transportation infrastructure and programs. Download the Guidebook at: nps.gov/subjects/transportation/bikeped.htm

Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails

The NPS owns nearly 5,000 miles of front country trails, including approximately 1,000 trail bridges and 40 trail tunnels. Bicycle and pedestrian trails allow visitors to leave their cars behind. Popular destinations and local communities can be linked together by front country trails, which are often used by pedestrians, families with strollers, people in wheelchairs, joggers and both recreational and commuting bicyclists.

Providing active transportation opportunities and keeping pedestrians and bicyclists safe are NPS priorities. However, despite their importance and high priority, service-wide transportation trail deferred maintenance amounted to \$227 million in 2017.

Active Transportation Programs and Partnerships

In addition to developing and maintaining active transportation trails, the NPS manages programs and partnerships that encourage visitors to experience parks by foot or bike. Many park visitors benefit from activities such as ranger-led walking or biking tours, or a partner-led special event. These activities and programs can be organized by park staff, concessionaires, volunteers, or friends groups. Parks can partner with nearby communities, nonprofits, or other entities to encourage walking and bicycling to and within national parks.

Access to and within the National Park System has been a defining experience for generations of visitors. The National Park Service coordinates the planning and implementation of transportation systems that improve the visitor experience and care for national parks by: **1) Preserving natural and cultural resources** **2) Enhancing visitor safety and security** **3) Protecting plant and animal species** **4) Reducing congestion** **5) Decreasing pollution.**



Shared Use Path in Bryce Canyon National Park
(Photo Credit: Volpe Center)



Bicyclists board the train at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. (Photo credit: NPS)



Bike share riders at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (Photo credit: NPS).

Car-free or “open street” opportunities and events enable visitors to enjoy walking and bicycling without cars. Open streets can occur regularly (e.g., weekly or monthly), seasonally (e.g., during a shoulder season when a road is not yet open to cars), or as a special event. Parks offering car free opportunities include Rock Creek Park in the District of Columbia (road segments are closed to motor vehicles on weekends); Grand Canyon National Park (offers car-free areas seasonally on Hermit Road); and Cades Cove Loop Road in Great Smoky Mountains National Park (closed to motor vehicle traffic two mornings each week during the summer months).

In recent years, bike sharing has become increasingly popular in the United States. Bike sharing – along with traditional bike rentals – allows visitors to access national parks from nearby communities or travel within parks without a personal vehicle. They also provide those traveling without a bicycle the option of using one in the park. Several national parks have partnered with municipalities to provide bike share stations: the National Mall and Memorial Parks (District of Columbia), Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (Minnesota) and San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (Texas).

Bryce Canyon National Park

In 2016, a new shared use path opened in Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah. The 5-mile trail is open to bicycles and pedestrians and is wheelchair accessible. It traverses from in the park to the shuttle staging area in Bryce Canyon City. It also connects to a paved path in Dixie National Forest that travels 17 miles through Red Canyon. Beyond excellent trail access within the park, this regional trail provides park visitors with many options to connect to other recreation lands in the area.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Since 2008, the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad “Bike Aboard!” program has served an average of 21,000 passengers each year. Cuyahoga Valley National Park partners with the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad so that bicyclists can ride the Towpath Trail and then hop on the railroad for an express return to their starting location. “Bike Aboard!” offers visitors the flexibility to pedal as far as they want and then return by train. It also provides a wonderful opportunity to experience the park from two different perspectives.

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

In 2012, the NPS and San Antonio, Texas, expanded the B-Cycle bike share into San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. The park has four 18th-century Spanish colonial missions along an 8-mile stretch of the San Antonio River. Most park visitors arrive by personal vehicle. The NPS wanted to provide an alternative to reduce vehicle and parking congestion. The City of San Antonio and the nonprofit San Antonio Bike Share worked with the park to implement a bike share system from downtown to the park. With funding from an FTA grant, the partners installed 12 new bike share stations.

The NPS is committed to being a leader in pursuing strategies that can help make park units more enjoyable, cleaner, quieter, and more sustainable for present and future generations.