



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Grand Canyon News Release

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Finding of No Significant Impact signed for Grand Canyon's South Rim Visitor Transportation Plan

Grand Canyon, Ariz. – A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Grand Canyon's South Rim Visitor Transportation Plan was signed Tuesday, May 27, by Michael D. Snyder, Regional Director for the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service.

The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) proposed a South Rim Visitor Transportation Plan for the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. The plan addresses the most pressing traffic, parking and visitor access issues in Grand Canyon Village. Improving visitor transportation facilities and services, such as parking and shuttle buses; making the most effective use of existing visitor facilities and services; and reducing safety risks due to conflicts between pedestrians, parked vehicles and moving traffic near Mather Point and elsewhere in Grand Canyon Village are issues that are addressed in the Plan. The actions implemented through this Plan will serve to accommodate current and anticipated future levels of visitation to the South Rim, enhance visitor experiences, and protect park resources. The actions will be affordable within park recreation fee revenues and will be adaptively managed to respond to visitation changes through the life of the Plan (to approximately 2020). Implementing the South Rim Visitor Transportation Plan will not preclude other future transportation systems from being implemented at Grand Canyon National Park, including those that may be required for substantial increases in visitation over time.

In February 2008, the NPS completed an Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect (EA) for the South Rim Visitor Transportation Plan that analyzed four alternatives (Alternatives A –

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D), including an alternative for taking no action (the No Action Alternative, Alternative A). The NPS identified alternative B as the preferred alternative in the EA and has selected alternative B for implementation. Under this alternative, the NPS will construct new visitor parking at Canyon View Information Plaza (CVIP) and initiate a new shuttle bus route to the gateway community of Tusayan. Alternative B emphasizes collaboration with adjacent communities, businesses, partners, and other agencies to address South Rim visitor transportation needs and incorporates adaptive management approaches to meet objectives of the Plan which will be implemented in phases over time. The initial phase of development is expected to begin in early 2009 and will include the following key elements:

- Vehicle access to the park's visitor center at CVIP with parking for up to 600 private vehicles (including RVs) and 40 commercial tour bus parking spaces (and other physical improvements);
- An adaptive management program to closely monitor and evaluate vehicular traffic, parking use, and shuttle bus ridership to determine the timing and requirement components of future improvements;
- A coordinated program of visitor information and marketing strategies to encourage visitors to travel into and through the park on shuttle buses.

Parking at CVIP will be designed for both visitors making short stops for orientation and canyon viewing then continuing on in their private vehicles, and for a portion of visitors who will leave their cars at CVIP and ride shuttle buses to visit other South Rim destinations during the day. Visitors will continue to have the option of driving through the Grand Canyon Village and parking at existing parking facilities.

The initiation of the pilot shuttle bus route between Tusayan and CVIP will begin June 2, 2008 to test its feasibility and evaluate the effectiveness of providing this service in the future. This project was also the subject of a separate analysis approved by the Park Superintendent in March 2008. Depending on the success of the pilot program, the NPS may also run the pilot program again during the summer season of 2009. The park will monitor the use of the pilot shuttle bus

route and parking in Tusayan and continue to pursue opportunities for partnering with businesses in Tusayan and other entities to meet the needs for visitor access to the South Rim.

Over time, if careful monitoring and evaluation of this first phase of implementation indicate the need, the NPS will construct up to 300 additional parking spaces at CVIP and/or up to 400 parking spaces with supporting shuttle bus loading and visitor facilities on USFS (Kaibab National Forest) land immediately north of Tusayan. Expanded shuttle bus service will connect Tusayan and the potential new parking facility with CVIP. Prior to implementation of any actions on Kaibab National Forest land as part of this project, the USFS will undertake a separate environmental analysis and decision-making process, tiered to the South Rim Visitor Transportation EA, to ensure their agency regulations and legal obligations are met before any construction could occur on USFS land.

“This is an exciting step for us”, stated Park Superintendent Steve Martin. “Grand Canyon is a world class national park and we want to provide a first class experience for everyone who comes to see it. The new transportation system will provide visitors with enhanced opportunities to plan their visit at Canyon View Information Plaza, including access to improved information about trip planning, park orientation, and better options for getting in and around the park.”

For more information on Grand Canyon’s South Rim Visitor Transportation Plan please visit <http://www.nps.gov/grca>. Copies of the EA and FONSI can be downloaded from <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>. The FONSI documents the rationale for the decision made on the South Rim Visitor Transportation Plan and includes a response to substantive comments received on the EA during the 30-day public comment period. For questions on the Plan or FONSI, please contact Vicky Stinson, Project Manager, at (928) 774-3026.

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