



Transportation

Project Newsletter • June 2012

A Note from the Superintendent

In 2010, Arches National Park broke a new record- more than 1 million visitors came to visit the park. In 2011, visitation increased by more than 26,000 visitors than the previous year. This year, 2012, is already shaping up to break last year's numbers! It is wonderful to see the ever growing popularity of Arches National Park and the enjoyment the park brings to more and more people.

In the park the visitor's experience is one of beautiful views sweeping from the high peaks of the La Sal mountains in the National Forest down to the Colorado River gorge and across varied and beautiful BLM public lands back to the park in the foreground. It is a stunning landscape.

However, with this growth in visitation the visitor experience in the park has become one of searching endlessly for a parking place. On most days, from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, parking lots in the park are filled to overflowing and parked cars line the roadsides. Visitors face long waits, disappointment, and frustration instead of the great experience they had expected.

Less obvious but equally important is the fact that as visitors drive throughout the park tailpipe emissions from their cars turn into haze and air pollution which can diminish views and harm plants and animals across the landscape – the very landscape we are charged with protecting.

Can we solve both of these problems? Can we cut air pollution and cut parking congestion at Arches National Park? We hope so, and we've launched the Alternative Transportation System and Congestion Management Study to help find solutions. We hope you'll join us in the effort.

*-Kate Cannon
Superintendent, Arches National Park*

The Alternative Transportation System and Congestion Management Study

Project Update

Since the last project newsletter in October 2011, the planning team consisting of NPS staff and the consultant team (The Louis Berger Group, Inc., Nelson Nygaard, and Rhodeside and Harwell) have been busy gathering data and information, as well as feedback from local stakeholders. The consultants have created multiple documents outlining the congestion issues, opportunities and constraints in the park and throughout the city of Moab. The consultants presented a baseline range of congestion management and shuttle strategies for Arches National Park, which provided the basis for the NPS, stakeholder and consultant team workshop in mid-November. The workshop provided the platform for the planning team to examine the range of transportation management options available. For more information on the outcome of

this workshop, please see page of 2 this newsletter.

Given the recommendations made at the November planning workshop, the consultant team has produced a Feasibility Study which will be the focus of a public meeting on June 14, 2012. There, the NPS will present alternative strategies and solicit public comment on them. The Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan would be available for public comment on the NPS planning website from June 6, 2012 - July 6, 2012. The back page of this newsletter provides information on where to access the Feasibility Study, when the public meeting will take place, and how to provide feedback. After the public comment period is completed, comments would be reviewed and financial constraints evaluated, then a decision would be made regarding pilot shuttle implementation.



A visualization of a proposed shuttle stop within Arches National Park.

Shuttle System Alternative

A shuttle system in Arches National Park would enhance the park’s accessibility by providing visitors with an attractive shuttle-based park experience that would be competitive with driving through the park.

The preferred shuttle scenario is designed to attract the largest market segments, or visitor groups, with the highest potential to use the shuttle. Passengers will access the shuttle exclusively from a park-and-ride location outside of the park. The shuttle seeks to offer a competitive alternative to driving for these segments by providing an equivalent or enhanced experience for travel within the park. By attracting a significant portion of these market segments, the shuttle can significantly relieve parking congestion.

The preferred shuttle route was designed to meet the following primary objectives. These include experiential goals to cater to the targeted market segments as well as NPS goals for costeffectiveness:

- Provide a direct route to Windows without a transfer and convenient 2-3 hour visitation options to cater to visitors who may have limited time and wish to see only Balanced Rock and the Windows section of the park.
- Include the high visitation sites to cater to the “All-day visitor” and “Guide-me tourist” to ensure visitors don’t feel they would be missing something by taking the shuttle.
- Provide a direct way home at the end of the day for hot and tired visitors and hikers returning from Devil’s Garden.
- Design simple, intuitive routes.
- Maximize access, while also taking efficiency and length of trip into consideration.
- Design for efficient and cost-effective routing and shuttle operations.

The proposed shuttle would operate every 15 minutes from the second Saturday in May through the last Sunday in September. The preferred route is shown in figure 1.

Addition of Specialty Shuttle Routes

Two specialty shuttle routes within the park and as a City of Moab connector shuttle were initially considered for the pilot shuttle system in the Draft Feasibility Study, but were not included due to funding constraints. Potentially, private businesses could provide these specialty routes or a connector shuttle.

Hiker Express Shuttle

The Hiker Shuttle would begin operation earlier than the other routes to allow hikers to reach the trailhead before the heat of the day and would operate through midmorning. Initially proposed Hiker Shuttle hours of operation were: 7 AM until 10 AM. As initially designed, the shuttle would not take visitors back to the entrance to the park. Hikers would board the main Arches Shuttle to return southbound when they are done hiking. As an incentive to use the shuttle, the park could restrict parking at Devil’s Garden to a 3 or 4 hour maximum.

Sunset Shuttle

The second specialty shuttle, the Sunset Shuttle, would make a non-stop trip to Delicate Arch in the evening for sunset. Like the Hiker Express, this shuttle route was designed to cater to a market segment that is relatively small, but has a disproportionate impact on congestion at the Wolfe Ranch parking lot during the sunset hours. The exact schedule of this route could vary by season according to the time of sunset. The shuttle would have to be timed to arrive at the Wolfe Ranch trailhead at least 70-90 minutes before sunset to allow variable hiking times to Delicate Arch.



City of Moab “Feeder” Shuttle

The initial pilot shuttle system will operate from a large park-and-ride lot outside the park entrance. However, access to the shuttle could also be provided through a Moab “feeder” shuttle that would bring visitors from their hotels in the city to the park entrance. Town-park feeder shuttles exist in many National Park communities across the country. Inclusion of a Moab route in the system was discussed, but was not included because of its cost. The addition of a Moab shuttle would change the visitor access experience to the Arches shuttle system and could offer an added incentive to ride the shuttle system.

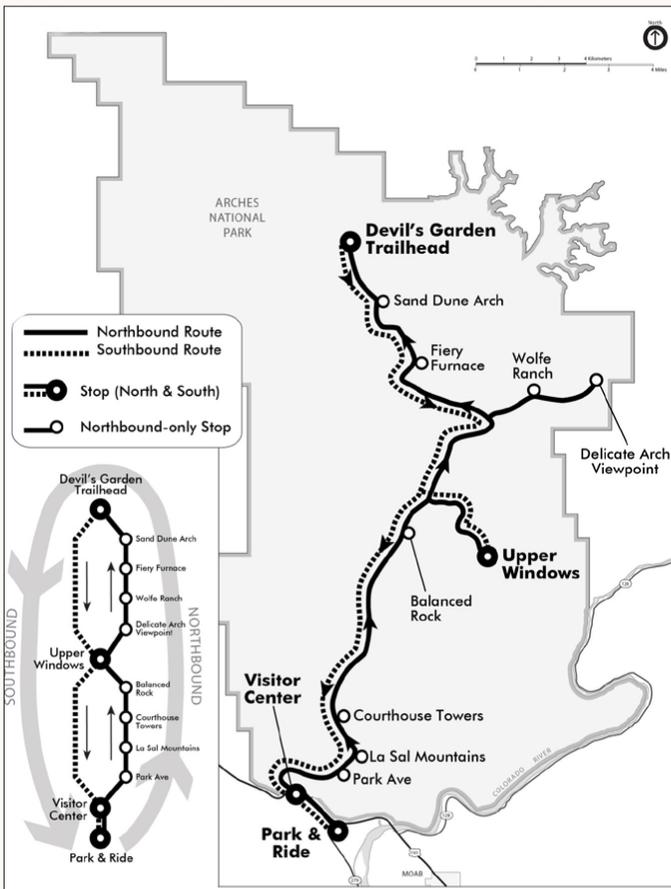


Figure 1. The main shuttle route recommended in the Feasibility Study.

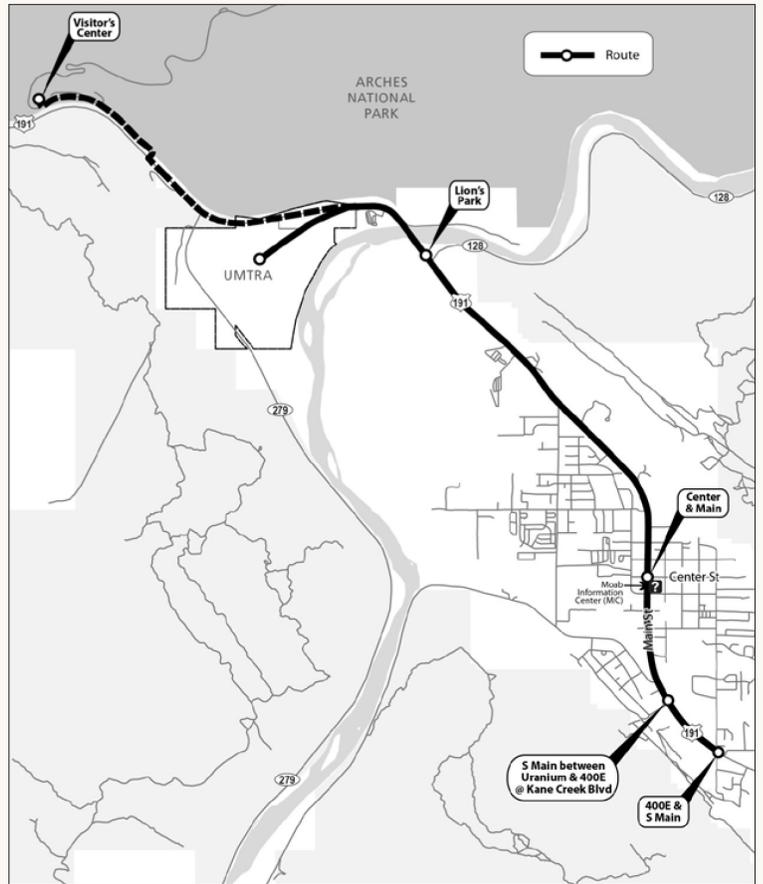


Figure 2. The proposed shuttle route option through Moab could be a potential business opportunity for private companies.

Non-Shuttle Congestion Management Alternatives

A range of non-shuttle congestion management strategies was also considered as a means to address the severe parking and congestion issues that Arches faces. In recent years, the number of cars in the park exceeds park capacity all day long on most days throughout the summer season. During the peak season the volume of visitors is so great and so consistent that offering incentives to visitors to arrive during off peak times of day or days of the week is ineffective. The only way to make any significant impact on congestion is by directly controlling the number of cars in the park at one time.

Reservation System

In response to the need to provide innovative and effective solutions for traffic congestion, a reservation system for Arches National Park could be considered as an alternative to the shuttle system. This could also be implemented as a complement to the shuttle, but is considered in the Final Feasibility Study as a stand-alone congestion management strategy. A reservation system would provide a systematic method to control the number of visitors entering the park in order to spread visitation more evenly throughout the day and throughout the season. A small number of first-come-first-

serve would be held for visitors without reservations. Directly regulating the number of visitors allowed to enter the park at a given time would have a directly proportional effect on traffic and parking conditions in the park.

Transportation Demand Management Coordinator

Another congestion management strategy could include a Travel Demand Management (TDM) Coordinator to proactively manage traffic and parking in Arches. Along with this coordinator, this non-shuttle congestion management strategy would require variable message signs and a highway advisory radio system to communicate with park visitors in real time. Three variable message signs would be required to communicate traffic and parking information to park visitors. Finally, temporary parking coordinators would be needed during the high season at three parking lots for an estimated four hours per day. These coordinators would monitor parking congestion levels and communicate parking congestion information in real time to the TDM coordinator.



Arches National Park
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Project Schedule

November 2011 – NPS Workshop to examine potential transportation strategies

Late Spring 2012 – Public meeting to present alternative strategies for feedback and public comment

June 2012 – Public newsletter project update with feedback on comments received on alternative strategies

Spring 2015 – 1 to 3 year Pilot Shuttle Program potentially begins

Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC)

The National Park Service's (NPS) Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov> is the electronic way to submit public comments for NPS projects and planning efforts. PEPC is a web-based system that facilitates public involvement in NPS projects and planning efforts nationwide. The public can comment on project documents open for review, as well as access schedules for projects along with specific information about public meetings. Anyone with an internet connection can access the site to find out what projects are available for public review, submit comments, or find information on public meetings. A map will display documents currently open for review.

There is a shortcut to finding Arches National Park projects in PEPC: just type in the browser <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/arch> and it will take you directly a list of all current Arches projects. From here you can select the 'Open for Comment' link in the

left navigation to find those documents currently open for commenting. You can select the Archived Projects link to find projects which have been officially 'closed' for more than a year. To view Arches' main park website click on "Park Information" for more planning information.

The Arches National Park Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan is available for public review and comment from June 6, 2012 - July 6, 2012. The study has been posted to the PEPC site and hardcopies will be available at the Grand County Public Library, park Visitor Center and NPS Headquarters.

Place for public meeting: at the Moab Arts and Recreation Center (MARC) from 5:30pm to 7:30pm

Comments can be submitted in PEPC (the preferred method) or mailed to:

National Park Service
Attn: Planning and Compliance
2282 S. West Resource Blvd
Moab, UT 84532

