



Public Comment Report

Moose-Wilson Corridor Comprehensive Management Plan Preliminary Alternatives



November 2014

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK MOOSE-WILSON CORRIDOR COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

SUMMARY

During the spring of 2014, the National Park Service (NPS) began development of the range of preliminary alternatives for the Moose-Wilson Corridor Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Previous to this effort, the public shared their thoughts and concerns on this important area of Grand Teton National Park during the public scoping period. These comments received during public scoping last fall were instrumental to the creation of the range of preliminary alternatives. While not required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Grand Teton National Park felt that public feedback on the preliminary alternatives would be vital to inform development of the Draft EIS. The public was asked to provide feedback on the preliminary alternatives newsletter during a 30-day commenting period from August 15 to September 15, 2014.

To inform the public of the range of preliminary alternatives and provide an update on the planning effort, a newsletter was released on August 14, 2014, that describes the draft goals and desired conditions for each fundamental resource and value, management strategies and contextual maps for each preliminary alternative, an update on data collection efforts, and next steps in the planning processes and schedule.

In order to reach a broad audience, the newsletter and information about the preliminary alternatives were shared with the public in a variety of ways. Paper copies of the newsletter were mailed to individuals on the park's general mailing list (528 contacts). Paper copies were also provided to the Teton County Library and the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center in Jackson, Wyoming. A press release was distributed announcing the release of the range of preliminary alternatives, which received coverage from a variety of news media and advocacy groups. The park's website and Constant Contact® Email Marketing™ campaign dedicated to this planning effort were also updated. The park's website included information on the plan and a link to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website where the public could access an electronic version of the newsletter and submit their comments.

During public review of the range of preliminary alternatives, a total of 2,605 individual correspondences were received. The majority of these comments were submitted directly to the PEPC website. Approximately 180 people attended an August 28, 2014, public open house held at the Teton County Library in Jackson, Wyoming. During the public open house, approximately 365 comments on flip charts and comment cards were received. All hand-written comments received during the public open house were transcribed and entered into the PEPC system. Hard copy letters that were mailed or delivered to the park were also entered into the PEPC system.

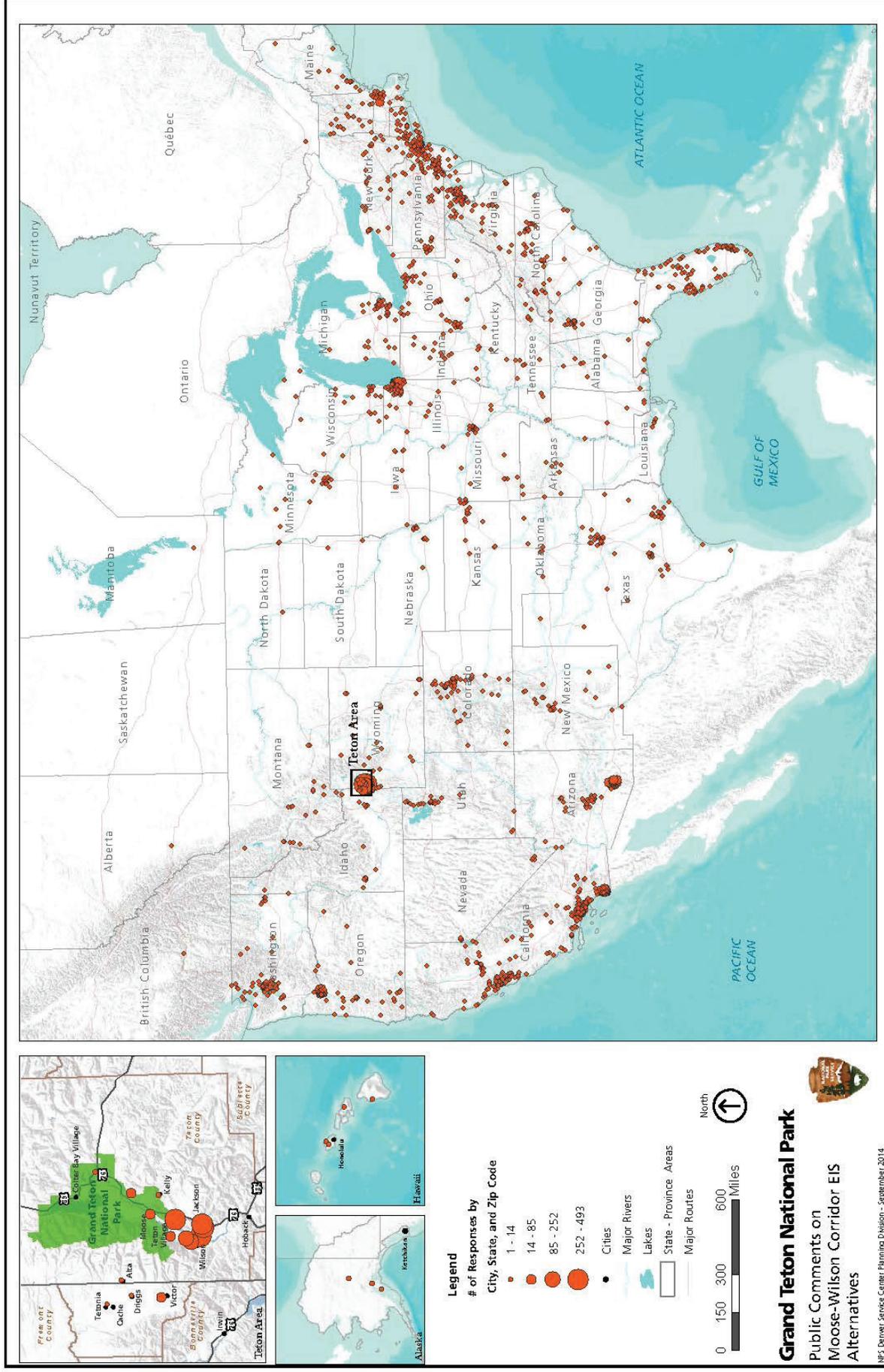
Public comments on the range of preliminary alternatives have been analyzed for content pertaining to the management strategies contained within the alternatives as well as for additional thoughts or ideas. These comments will help inform the planning team's refinement of the preliminary alternatives. Once the alternatives are refined, the National Park Service will evaluate the impacts of the alternatives before identifying the NPS preferred alternative. This is the alternative that the agency believes would best accomplish its goal of protecting the fundamental resources and values of the park. The preferred alternative will be presented in the draft plan/EIS, which will also include a detailed impact analysis, projected costs for each alternative, mitigation measures, and the appropriate consultation with other agencies and governments as required by law. The public will be invited and encouraged to provide comments when the draft plan/EIS is released for a 60-day public review period.

The preferred alternative identified in the draft plan/EIS may be a combination of management strategies from the range of alternatives, rather than identifying one of the alternatives as the agency preferred approach. For this reason, summaries of public comments have been organized in this report in the same manner in which they were presented in the newsletter—by the nine management strategy categories. This scoping report summarizes all public comments received during public review of the range of preliminary alternatives that are pertinent to those management strategy categories or that warrant consideration as the alternatives are refined.

The following table provides the distribution of public comments that were submitted or entered in the PEPC system. Public comments were submitted from individuals in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. The following map depicts the distribution of these public comments by zip code. In addition, 18 correspondences were received from 11 foreign countries.

Distribution by State of Public Comments Submitted Directly to the PEPC System		
State	Percentage	No. of Correspondences
Wyoming	26.1%	586
California	12.8%	287
New York	4.5%	100
Florida	4.1%	92
Washington	3.8%	86
Colorado Pennsylvania	2.9% (per state)	65 (per state)
Illinois	2.8%	63
Texas	2.7%	61
Arizona Idaho New Jersey Ohio Oregon	2.1% (or less per state)	47 (or less per state)
Maryland Massachusetts Michigan Minnesota Missouri Montana New Mexico North Carolina Utah Virginia Wisconsin	1.9% (or less per state)	43 (or less per state)

Distribution by State of Public Comments Submitted Directly to the PEPC System		
State	Percentage	No. of Correspondences
Alabama		
Alaska		
Arkansas		
Connecticut		
Delaware		
Georgia		
Hawaii		
Indiana		
Iowa		
Kansas		
Kentucky		
Louisiana		
Maine		
Mississippi	0.9%	20
Nebraska	(or less per state)	(or less)
Nevada		
New Hampshire		
North Dakota		
Oklahoma		
Rhode Island		
South Carolina		
South Dakota		
Tennessee		
Vermont		
Washington, D.C.		
West Virginia		



DISTRIBUTION BY ZIP CODE OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ENTERED INTO THE PEPC SYSTEM

In addition to general public comments, the National Park Service also received letters from official representatives of the following agencies and organizations:

- Adventure Cycling Association
- Alliance for Historic Wyoming
- Casper Mountain Biathlon Club
- Citizens for Common Sense
- Coalition of National Park Service Retirees
- Conservation Science Institute
- Cougar Fund
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Friends of Pathways
- Greater Yellowstone Coalition
- Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce
- Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
- Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation
- National Parks Conservation Association
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
- Save Historic Jackson Hole
- Sierra Club
- Sierra Club – Wyoming Chapter
- Society for American Archaeology Repatriation
- Teton Back Country Horsemen
- Teton County and Town of Jackson
- Teton Equestrian Club
- Teton Village Association
- Treasure Valley Cycling Alliance
- Wilderness Society
- Wildlife Trust
- Wilson Advisory Committee
- Wyoming Office of Tourism
- Wyoming Pathways

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Correspondence. A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter. It can be in the form of a letter, written comment form, note card, or open house transcript.

Comment. A comment is a portion of the text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject or issue. It could include such information as an expression of support or opposition to the use of a potential management strategy, additional data regarding the existing condition, or an opinion debating the adequacy of an analysis.

Comment Summary. A grouping that is centered on a common subject. Comment summaries combine similar comments. Representative quotes from the comments used to create a comment summary may also be presented.

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following comment summaries are organized by the nine management strategy categories that were presented in the preliminary alternatives newsletter. These categories include:

- Traffic Management along Moose-Wilson Road
- Physical Characteristics of Moose-Wilson Road
- Moose-Wilson Road Realignment
- Turnouts and Parking
- Bicycle Use
- Commercial Activity
- Death Canyon
- Winter Access and Use
- Visitor Use and Experience / Education and Interpretation

For a description of the preliminary alternative strategies, please refer to the preliminary alternatives newsletter available at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/moosewilson>

Management strategies describing horse use were not presented in the newsletter as a stand-alone management strategy category; however, public comments received demonstrated the need to call out horse use specifically. Therefore, horse use is included as a separate comment summary within this report. The final section of the report includes a summary of general comments received on the planning effort.

The following topic questions were posed to commenters to focus the conversation on the specific management strategies of the preliminary alternatives.

1. Which strategies in the preliminary alternatives do you think should be carried forward to best achieve the purpose and address the need for the plan? Why do you think they should be carried forward?
2. Which strategies in the preliminary alternatives do you think would not achieve the purpose and address the need for the plan? Why do you think they should not be carried forward?
3. Are there other strategies that should be included in the preliminary alternatives that are not already presented? If so, which strategies and why should they be considered?
4. What other comments or suggestions do you have?

Responses to these questions were used as the basis for summarizing public comments under each management strategy category. Each comment summary is then followed by representative quotes from individual correspondences that support the range of public opinions on the specific strategies.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ALONG MOOSE-WILSON ROAD

In the preliminary alternatives, several management strategies were presented regarding traffic management along Moose-Wilson Road. These strategies ranged from traveler alerts and reduced speed limits to adaptive management strategies that manage use levels in the future. The following provides a summary of comments received, organized around 11 topics:

1. temporary closures or limits to traffic on the road
2. clarifications on management strategy details
3. seasonal closures
4. two-way and through traffic in the corridor
5. traveler alerts and wait times
6. reducing speed limits along Moose-Wilson Road
7. gate at the Laurance S. Rockefeller
8. Preserve
9. sequencing of traffic
10. two-day motor vehicle closures
11. reservation system
12. one-way road and other management strategies related to traffic management

General Traffic Restrictions. Commenters expressed a variety of opinions on management strategies that include limitations to traffic volume (i.e., sequencing in alternative C and a reservation system in alternative D) or closures to vehicles (alternative B). Many commenters expressed general support for limits or closures without necessarily mentioning specific management strategies. Many commenters expressed general opposition to the idea of limiting vehicular use on the road or temporarily closing the road.

Commenters offered a number of arguments or suggestions for using strategies that temporarily close the road to vehicles or limit the number of vehicles in the corridor. These arguments included:

- Reducing the number of vehicles and maintaining slow speeds will control traffic levels while still providing access to the corridor.
- Communicating any implemented limitations or road closures to visitors before they get to the entrance and providing space for them to turn around before they enter the corridor.
- Limiting the number of vehicles will make a safer environment for visitors and wildlife alike.

Commenters offered a number of arguments against strategies that temporarily close the road to vehicles or limit the number of vehicles in the corridor. These arguments included:

- If parking (including where parking is and is not allowed) is clearly defined and speeds are slow, negative effects of traffic will be avoided therefore likely making limits to the number of vehicles unnecessary.
- The Moose-Wilson Road is part of the larger regional transportation system and limiting vehicles on it will only increase traffic on roads in Jackson.
- Limits and closures will be confusing to visitors and cause frustration, therefore causing increases in miles driven and negatively impacting local economies.
- Moose-Wilson Road closures may become a safety issue in times of emergencies.

“Please ensure that as the Environmental Impact Study begins, you prioritize this road as a quiet park destination and wildlife-viewing area; not as a busy traffic route. I encourage the use of traffic management techniques to reduce the number of vehicles, maintain slow speeds, and to eliminate commercial and commuter traffic along the road.”

“I urge you to stem the tide of this increased vehicular traffic by limiting the number of cars allowed to access this corridor, especially during the peak tourist season; by eschewing paved roads in favor of the gravel roads that help preserve the historic quality of the area; and by reducing speed limits to protect wildlife and discourage motorists from traveling at unsafe and unsustainable speeds.”

“You should continue to allow two way traffic on the road. If you do decide to limit (something I hope you will not do), you will need to have that notice way before the Ranger Gate, and provide ample turn around for visitors who already have their cars full of family and food for a fun day in the park. You would have to electronically have that notice at inns, hotels, motels, condos, etc., so people would know beforehand the park is full.”

“Limiting the number of vehicles entering the area would allow for traffic control, without prohibiting travel. This would seem acceptable if traffic control is a major issue.”

“Alternative A should be chosen. All of the alternative plans include some type of closure or delay of entry to the road, thus forcing significant traffic through the city of Jackson. Maintaining awareness of the closure times will make it difficult for visitors to plan efficient travel. There should be a plan developed that maintains the road at all times but still addresses the volume of traffic with adequate parking and turnouts and speed bumps to control speed.”

“Limiting the traffic in any way as laid out in a few of the proposals is not a good idea in my opinion. Limiting access would only confuse and frustrate our guests who are trying to use the Moose-Wilson road.”

“Strategies B, C, and D all offer interesting ideas for improving access and controlling traffic, but unfortunately they all involve temporary road closures. Such an arrangement will greatly complicate the access to the park from the growing Teton Village area.”

“I feel that arbitrarily limiting the traffic usage of the road on certain days/ certain hours is confusing and does not benefit the majority of Park visitors. In the same way, reservations are cumbersome and limiting as well. I think going this route will anger more visitors with unnecessary regulation rather than it will improve people’s overall experience. As someone who lives in the park, the Moose-Wilson Road is useful to get to other parts of the county as well (such as Teton Village) without wasting time and gas going around through Jackson. It seems to be an important corridor for guests staying in Teton Village in the summer to access the park as well. Closing any section of the road would damage the economy of Teton Village and the area as a whole.”

“Road closures would be confusing and would lead to visitors driving to the road, only to be turned back - a waste of both time and fossil fuels. Road closures would eliminate an alternate route from Moose to Wilson or Jackson should there be a disruption in traffic on Highway 89 (e.g. due to an accident, earthquake or other disaster). The lack of any alternate route could be a safety issue.”

Clarification on Management Strategy Details. Some commenters found it difficult to evaluate the adaptive management strategies that proposed limiting use or taking action during peak use times (i.e., gate at the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve in alternative B and sequencing of vehicles in alternative C). Commenters asked for clarification on what peak times will encompass and how those strategies will be operationalized.

“It is nonetheless extremely hard to contemplate restricted access. It would be very helpful to know what is meant by “peak use” times.”

“When limiting through travel I do question what “peak use” would be defined as, 4th of July and Pioneer’s Weekend or June 15th to August 15th. Summer is a long very busy with a broad, flat, peak period.”

“Also not sure about restricting traffic flow by numbers of cars. For one thing, “peak use” is not well defined. For another, while I totally sympathize that this is a good way to reduce use of the road -which is, indeed, necessary, I worry that not being able to plan will frustrate and irritate visitors and cause a lot of hard feelings and complaints.”

Seasonal Closures. Commenters both support and oppose seasonal closures of Moose-Wilson Road. Supports found the seasonal closures appropriate while others found fall closures to be arbitrary and with little positive impacts. One commenter believes that alternative C’s strategy of closing the road after September 30 should be abandoned and vehicles should be allowed on the road until it is covered in snow.

“I also support the use of seasonal closures, efforts to limit winter disturbance of wildlife and planning alternatives that protect wildlife security and movement corridors from human disturbance. Most importantly, development in areas that have not been previously impacted should be avoided.”

“Given the exceptionally high quality habitat available within the Moose-Wilson corridor, JHWF [Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation] encourages the National Park Service to consider seasonal closures and restrictions at times of year when animals are most vulnerable to human disturbance. These closures and restrictions should apply to the Snake River bottom (in winter), other riparian habitat such as the Sawmill Ponds, and the road itself when appropriate. JHWF applauds Grand Teton officials for currently implementing these types of closures when bears are present on the roadway.”

“I don’t think closing the road earlier in the fall or at Sawmill Ponds would achieve anything significant. I’m a photographer and love to photograph in the beaver pond area before the road opens in the spring and after it closes in the spring.”

“Closing the MW road to motor vehicles on Sept 30 is not a reasonable idea. October is a beautiful month, and an excellent time for fishing on the Snake River. Closing the road on Sept 30 would make it much less convenient for West Bank residents to access the Snake in the Park for fishing . The road should be left open to motor vehicles as long as it is not covered with snow.”

Two-way and Through Traffic in the Corridor. Commenters both support and oppose the Moose-Wilson corridor remaining as a two-way through road. Commenters often made general comments on this topic rather than mentioning specific management strategies. Some suggested that the road be closed entirely to vehicles and open to nonmotorized types of use. Others suggested that vehicles should be allowed to travel to destinations in the corridor but not through the entire corridor and that use of the road for commuting should be minimized. Alternatively, commenters stressed the need to continue two-way vehicular access on Moose-Wilson Road. For those that support continuing two-way through traffic, Moose-Wilson Road is part of the overall road system of the area and should therefore not be restricted as it will add pressure to that larger system.

“Only quiet vehicles and walkers should be permitted so as not to disturb the wildlife and nature in all forms - that’s the purpose of the park, not to provide a playground for loud terrain vehicles.”

“Through auto traffic is not appropriate in the corridor. The park has excess vehicular traffic and alternative modes of transportation should be encouraged.”

“Close the road permanently! Give it back to wildlife for their safety. There are lots of roads in the Teton NP for visitors to view and photograph wildlife, let’s give the Moose-Wilson road back to the bears, moose, and all the rest of its first inhabitants!”

“Keep the corridor free of commuter traffic. This is a special site that should be savored, not rushed through. Let commercial traffic bypass the park rather than go through such a bio diverse area.”

“You should continue to allow two way traffic on the road. . . You should go back to the drawing board, and realize that the Park’s part of the Moose Wilson Road is part of the overall road system in the valley. Actions you take will affect other parts of the system; I don’t want to enter the Park by going through Jackson - the traffic is already overcrowded.”

“I think that plans that prohibit two-way motor vehicle travel during any day/ time periods are prohibitive to visitation of the park by people staying in the Teton Village area. Having stayed in Teton Village several times, the Moose-Wilson Road was our primary route for entrance to the park. Removing this option, for example by limiting the road use to one-way traffic or for bicycles only, would significantly impact these visitors in a negative way.”

“Restrictions on the use of the Moose-Wilson Road as envisioned in Options B, C and D will inevitably build local political momentum for the construction of a North Bridge and for the expansion of Route 391 into a four-lane highway. To my mind, a North Bridge and a four-lane highway would do much more harm to wildlife and wetlands in our valley than the continuation of unrestricted two-way traffic on the

Moose-Wilson road. A North Bridge would also unbalance the economy of the county by marginalizing tourist-centered and other businesses in the Town of Jackson while causing Teton Village to mushroom. It would also stimulate housing and perhaps other kinds of development on the private land immediately south of the southern boundary of the Grand Teton National Park, near the entrance gate along the Moose-Wilson road. I can also foresee the likelihood of increased tourist-season demand for flights in and out of the Jackson Hole Airport, which in turn could increase the pressure for lengthening the runways with the attendant harm to sage grouse and other wildlife.”

Traveler Alerts and Wait Times. Commenters were generally supportive of implementing traveler alerts about traffic in the corridor. In addition to alerts, some commenters provided ideas on other information sources that individuals would need to effectively plan their travel, particularly if traffic congestion exists. Generally, commenters were supportive of strategies that deliver traffic condition information to locals and visitors before they arrive at the Moose-Wilson corridor.

“Provide ITS devices to inform motorists in strategic locations outside the park to give motorists the opportunity to adjust their travel plans utilizing the existing infrastructure in place, such as turnouts, driveways, parking lots,... that have minimal roadway improvement costs. Also consider other technologies such as local radio, email, hotlines, website, apps.....Strategic locations would be on 89 N&S, Moose, Wilson, WYO 22 E&W, WYO 390 @ Alpines, leaving Teton Village...”

“Allow daily commuters to know ahead of entering the road if there is congestion, problems, etc. so they can seek alternative route to their destination.”

“We like the idea of having electronic signs prior to the payment window offering information on the road and parking lots capacity. Also, allow cars more room to pull off to pull around the entrance station if they decide not to enter the park due to congestion or closures. Adding another fee kiosk specifically for motorists with existing passes would also help alleviate congestion at the entrance station.”

Reducing Speeds Along Moose-Wilson Road. Commenters generally stated that speed limits should be reduced within the corridor. Commenters stated that reduced speeds would increase safety for bicycling and other nonmotorized uses. The need to enforce speed limits was often identified by commenters. One commenter stated that speed limits should remain as they are.

“Implement a slower speed limit - 10-15 mph on the entire road. This would make it a bit safer for bicycles.”

“The speed limit needs to be set at 20 miles per hour for the corridor and enforced.”

“Reduced speed limits will not work unless there is increased enforcement.”

“Consider making the road one-way. Consider installing speed bumps and other methods to substantially reduce speeds on the road. I envision a speed of around 10 mph as the goal. Either method would make the road safer for all, including bicyclists, with a minimum of disturbance. Either would make the road extremely inefficient as a commuting route and thereby greatly reduce traffic”

“In my opinion, one of the most important actions on the existing road or the alternative road is to control the speed limit, particularly during morning and evening commutes. I know that many people use the road as a shortcut to the airport

or village and if that connection will continue, it must be patrolled and controlled to protect people and wildlife.”

“Finding a way to reduce the motorist speed through this corridor is critical. Regardless of the plan there must be a 25 mile per hour speed limit that is heavily enforced. Cameras could be placed along the corridor and violators could be ticketed at the gates as those motorist exit.”

“Traffic speeds on the road are adequate, they do not need to be reduced.”

Gate at the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve (Alternative B). Commenters both support and oppose bisecting Moose-Wilson Road during peak use times with a gate at the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve (alternative B). Those who support the strategy stated that this approach would help manage traffic and define the corridor as a destination. One commenter suggested the gate always be closed except in emergencies. Those who oppose the strategy contend that it will be confusing to visitors, will actually increase traffic volumes on the road, and will interfere with the larger area traffic system and residents’ ability to travel to other destinations.

“A gate at the LSR that could be closed at high traffic times would help to reduce traffic.”

“A gate at the LSR is a good idea. But, it should be closed at all times except for emergencies.”

“A closure gate at the LSR Preserve prohibiting through traffic, except for administrative and emergency use, is the most effective, most inexpensive, readily placed of any proposed strategies.”

“It’s vital that through traffic is restricted during peak hours: the additional parking at the LSR Preserve & gate is an excellent idea. This will prevent drivers from both directions from using Moose/Wilson as a speedway to get to either Teton Village or GTNP’s Moose entrance. People can drive through town or Spring Gulch.”

“I think that limiting traffic to go halfway in the parking lot and forced to turn back would only create more traffic driving the wrong way around to the other entrance of the road, and thereby doubling traffic on the mosse wilson road (I know I would go in both ends and turn around).”

“I believe that gating or closing the road would be short sighted and would remove a wonderful access that should be maintained, though with reduced traffic and a save access for bicyclists.”

“Gates and closures will only exacerbate traffic in other parts of the county. Roadway redundancy is poor in Teton County, let’s not make it any worse.”

“Putting a gate in the middle of the road and having traffic turn around at LSR is also not a good solution. This will be confusing the visitor and create more traffic jams on Moose-Wilson Road. A gate will cause people to spend even more time in their cars, because they will be driving more and more through the Town of Jackson and other roads in the park. More cars on the highway equates to more wildlife collisions. We have to encourage people to get out of their cars, not spend more time in them.”

“Gating the road at the LSR Preserve during peak times would be very inconvenient for Westbank residents.”

Timed Sequencing of Traffic (Alternative C). Commenters both support and oppose timed sequencing of vehicles during peak use periods (alternative C). Many who commented on this strategy provided thoughts on how this type of strategy could be implemented if adopted. One commenter suggested that a standard wait time to enter the corridor be put into place. Another suggested that toll gates be established and that a total number of vehicles at one time should be used rather than vehicles per hour. Commenters who oppose this strategy believe that idling lanes will cause negative impacts to both natural resources and visitor experiences.

“I did like the idea to add intervals between vehicle entrances.”

“I wouldn’t be opposed to a standard wait time to be able to enter (no matter when you show up or how big the line is, you must wait 20 minutes to enter. I would be sure that it is where I want to go before waiting that long.) This should only be used with extremely judiciously though, why play games?”

“Toll gates on either end of corridor to manage the number of individuals entering and exiting. Don’t use vehicles per hour as indicator, as there are many other various modes of travel such as hiking, biking, horseback. The common denominator is the number of individuals.”

“The Moose- Wilson Corridor should have a defined carrying capacity of cars and the road use should be limited to meet that on a daily basis.”

“All the strategies for limiting traffic are interesting and worth considering. Probably the most practical alternative would be limiting traffic to the corridor by queuing up as was suggested. Closing it two days a week would not limit traffic on other days.”

“At times of high volume traffic, the National Park Service should limit the number of vehicles entering the corridor during certain peak periods. Hourly limits would be established to ensure that desired conditions were maintained and queuing areas would be established at either end of the road where vehicles could wait before entering the corridor.

“Maintaining the rural quality of the Moose-Wilson road and preventing it from becoming just another high-volume, paved highway will continue to allow park visitors to enjoy this corridor as a natural area (rather than simply a thoroughfare to a more distant destination) and prevent the accelerated destruction of the corridor’s natural beauty and the elimination of the wildlife that have lived there for decades (or longer). “

“If you are going to go with any strategy which creates queues or in any way precludes use of the road as a thoroughfare, then you need real time signage at the airport explaining the road situation. TV and nearby residents frequently use the road to go to and from the airport.”

“Closure is wrong because it causes an imbalance of traffic flow, idling lines and erratic visitor experiences causing huge negative impacts environmentally and to the visitor experience.”

“We do not like the Adaptive Strategy in Alternative C . It will potentially cause huge lines at the entrance stations which are already suffering long lines.”

Two-Day Motor Vehicle Closures (Alternative C). Many commenters found the motor vehicle two-day-per-week closures (alternative C) to be undesirable. Commenters believe the strategy will cause frustration and confusion for visitors even if a schedule of closure days is posted and could be difficult for park staff. Commenters also speculated as to how the closures would be managed and when they would take place. In addition, commenters expressed the belief that by providing parking, making road improvements, and controlling speed there will be no need for temporary road closures. The ability to access sites within the corridor and the other portions of Grand Teton National Park through this road was stressed as an important and highly valued experience. Other commenters are supportive of two-day closures as a way to provide a bicycle and pedestrian use and provided ideas on how this concept could be improved.

“Strategy C is going to cause confusion, anger, and frustration to park visitors. Keeping track of which day of the week they can drive on the road is going to be a major issue. Even if there are a lot of signs showing the schedule, many people are not going to read them. If the goal is for “bike/pedestrian only” time on the road, it would be better to have it closed to vehicles during certain hours of the day. Additionally, there will be problems with park employees and volunteers who have to drive to their duty station on days the road is closed to vehicles. Some visitors will not understand why some people get to drive on the road while others do not.”

“Alternative B doesn’t address that problem at all and C reduces bicycle access to two days a week (what days would those be?) and vehicle traffic to 5 days a week which would greatly limit access for both users including hikers vehicle access to trail heads when the whole problem we’re having is due to increased demand across the board. Reducing access will only exacerbate the primary problem you’re trying to solve. I also see nightmare management scenarios for alternative C as a practical matter.”

“Closing the road on certain days would be a huge irritant to our visitors that are here a couple nights.”

“Road closures cause an imbalance of traffic flow, idling lines and erratic visitor experiences with negative impacts to the environment and the public”

“Closing the road two days per week would be very inconvenient for Westbank residents. Bike path would be much better.”

“Restricting vehicle traffic would be a terrible idea. What about the L. Rockefeller Reserve that has a trail going up to Phelps Lake? Has any thought been given to the impact closing this road to vehicle traffic for two days would have on this park of the park? Also, having a reservation system for use of the road is a terrible idea, further restricting how and when people can get to the Reserve.”

“During peak visitation times, Moose-Wilson Road should be open ONLY to bicycles and pedestrians between Sawmill Ponds Overlook and the Granite Canyon trailhead AT LEAST two days a week OR MORE FREQUENTLY should the volume of traffic require such closures.”

“I very much like the bicycle-only days. It might be good to ease access to bicycles, eg, by some sort of bike-share system at the entrance to the road.”

“I could back the closing of the road for 2 days a week or at certain times during the day especially if paving of dirt section or bike path is not done.”

“what about closing the road everyday during certain hours, say, 7am-9am and 1pm-3pm. just close gates on either end. if you are parked along the road plan to work around the closure or get stuck on the inside of closed gate.”

Reservation System (Alternative D). Commenters both support and oppose the management strategy of a reservation system outlined in alternative D. Those who support the strategy believe that a reservation system would allow for access while controlling traffic levels and providing a positive visitor experience. Those opposed to a reservation system believe that it will be costly, difficult to implement, confusing for visitors, and would infringe on their ability to access the corridor. Some commenters had questions about the reservation system and asked for more details on how it would be implemented.

“The reservation system for cars will work effectively without putting the ranger at the gate at risk of abuse from angry drivers and will control the bumper-to-bumper car traffic.”

“A reservation system for the road and for the LSR (maybe also for parking at Death Canyon trailhead) would reduce the amount of cars idling while waiting for parking space, and also would reduce frustration of people waiting for parking spaces.”

“Please maintain the existing road and keep it low-speed and low traffic. This area provides a unique experience for many people to experience wildlife. Perhaps using a ticket system for certain areas of the park (drivers get an assigned time to pass through the area) would help.”

“Plan D may have the best idea, to institute a Reservation system, a more guaranteed way of keeping down the problems associated with congestion.”

“I liked D, until I saw the “reservation system.” That is government bureaucracy at its finest. People go to the Laurence Rockefeller Preserve on a whim, not by reservation. We have a house in the park and often go to the Preserve on a moment’s notice, or decide which hiking trail to take on the way to Moose. A reservation system is against the entire idea of the park, that it is open to wandering and going where one wants without government intervention.”

“reservations for travel on the mw road will be a costly nightmare.”

“Reservation system as an Adaptive Strategy in Alternative D sounds horrible and implementation would be a nightmare.”

“I am concerned about establishing a reservation system during peak periods. That may create confusion for visitors, so the implementation would need to be done sensitively.”

“Reducing and limiting traffic flow is a very big mistake. The last thing we need is a reservation system to drive down the road. I can’t imagine that ANY Teton County WY residents are in favor of this decision. ...It’s bad enough that reserving camp sites is so difficult during peak summer months. It seems strange that one would need to also reserve the right to drive down the road. This change will make me use the park less often.”

One-Way Road. Commenters both support and oppose Moose-Wilson Road being made into a one-way road—an option that was not included in the preliminary alternatives. Many commenters who support this idea asked that this strategy be included in the range of alternatives. Supporters cited this strategy as a way to reduce and manage traffic levels and provide safe access to nonmotorized users. Some commenters provided specific ideas of how one-way access could be implemented. Those opposed to this idea expressed the belief that a one-way option is not desirable and asked that it not be considered in the future. Commenters cited the inconvenience and confusion of one-way traveling and the impact it would have on visitors.

“perhaps make the road one way , going south from 10 pm until 4 am then make it only north from 4 am to 7 am....two way the rest of the time...just a thought. Please , never put any lights on the road or hideous speed bumps, we have lived with that bumpy road long enough...thank you.”

“I have re-read the alternatives A-D and ask that you consider another option: a one-way road. Although I understand this would be very unpopular with many people - at least initially - it seems to me the best option for the following reasons:

1. It would immediately reduce vehicular traffic by 50% -for sustainability this reduction is essential. 2. It would emphasize the roads ecological & scenic value & de-emphasize it as a traffic corridor - which no park road should really be. 3. It would be safer for BOTH cars and bikes as each could have their designated lane with no hazard from oncoming traffic. 4. It would necessitate that all travelers go past BOTH Teton Village & Jackson - thereby bringing business to both communities. 5. It would involve very minimal disruption/alteration to the existing road & hence less impact on wildlife, less cost, etc. 6. It would complete the loop that the Pathways advocates have so strenuously sought.”

“We like the idea of considering “directional” or one-way vehicle traffic if that would deter the use of this route by through-drivers who are not coming to visit the park.”

“ One-way road similar to current width, that accommodates vehicles and bikes, with seasonal suitable spring, fall, and winter closures. (Similar to the Jenny Lake road, with bikes allowed both directions). This would accommodate destination visitors and local recreationists without adding more pavement and without increasing habitat fragmentation.”

“Going with a one way alternative will over time create a environment that will drive more development not less due to additional pressure applied due to growth in park attendance.”

“Having the M-W go one-way, or alternate N and S would be too confusing. It’s true that it would lessen the traffic, but still doesn’t make much sense to me.”

“Economically I think it would be a disaster to close the road, or make it one way. If I was a tourist and pulled up to the closed end, I would not be very happy”

Other Management Strategies Related to Traffic Management. Commenters provided a variety of thoughts on strategies that they believe should be considered in order to address traffic management along Moose-Wilson Road. Some of the provided suggestions included: making a loop with two one-way road segments, close the road entirely to vehicles, close an interior section of the road, build structures that allow wildlife movement, make the road a dead-end at Granite Canyon, institute a fee policy for the corridor, create staggered one-lane route options, increase park ranger presence, create an alternate route or lane specifically for local commuters and commercial vehicles, close the road for wildlife, and open the road only for specific hours of the day.

“Close off middle section of corridor to all modes year round, to preserve the natural integrity and minimize wildlife interactions in the area. between Death Canyon and Sawmill ponds.”

“Create a one-way couplet between Death Canyon and Sawmill Ponds, utilizing existing alignment as the Southbound one-way and the proposed realignment as the Northbound one-way where wildlife interactions would in theory only interact with one direction at a time. At certain times of the year two-way traffic can be place on either road for incident management, such as, wildlife jams, repairs/maintenance.....”

“I have seen green covered bridges built in Europe and the Netherlands to allow elk and such to travel over highways. Or put the cars up on an overpass build where the road is.”

“Make Moose Wilson Road a “dead-end” road. End the road before the Ranger Station at the South end of the Park. Access for Moose Wilson Road would only be from the north. Move the Entrance to Grand Teton NP south 1/2 mile so that it encompasses Moose Wilson Road”

“If the answer to Question 3 is unacceptable than charge a fee each direction for each use. No daily, weekly, monthly, or annual passes. Fee only.”

“I’m disappointed that closing the road to motor vehicles wasn’t proposed as an alternative. It was mentioned by many folks in their initial written comments. Why was it not presented?”

“Totally close the road between Saw Mill Ponds and the Death Canyon Road. Either take the road out all together. Or if the park needs it for some real reason for their own use, then put up formidable barricades.

That stretch is some of the most vulnerable. It includes the wet lands and a lot of the choke cherry and hawthorn and service berry that the bears are using in late summer and autumn. It is a good area not to have the road.”

“Create traffic calming zones (at granite trailhead parking, LSR and Death Canyon intersections and Sawmill ponds parking) using two elements - stops signs at each location and a narrow(er) roadway creating one way at a time traffic for 50-100 yards. This would allow visitors time to read directional signs, choose to park and/or take the alternate roads without being honked at by those just trying to get through.”

“Past experience...park rangers have been most helpful in directing traffic if needed or sharing relevant information about the viewing of wildlife. Perhaps having a ranger positioned at the beginning of the road at either entrance to answer any questions, point out where wild life is, etc. would be helpful. Having rangers arrive simply when wildlife has been seen and “crowd control” is needed could perhaps be offered on a more scheduled basis. Having said that we are very, very aware of funding/budget challenges in carrying out many initiatives.”

“Maybe the only solution to your traffic problem is another route for local and commercial drivers. Today’s public and commercial interests are in such a hurry and their vehicles are built to accommodate high speed. Please do not build a road that accommodates high speed people and vehicles.”

“Close the entire corridor to vehicle and bicycle road and pathway access from 9pm - 6am (dusk to dawn). The NPS would have the authority and flexibility to restrict corridor access anytime to protect any park resource. Most of the wildlife moves around during these hours and are very difficult to see. Wildlife does not need to be stressed with nighttime encounters.”

“Is having a local thruway a possibility? Your vehicle has a tag that clears you-kinda like Fast Pass out here. No tag, you have to pay a premium. Think of the thruway as a commute lane.”

“if airport traffic is a problem in the AM, don’t open road until 7 or 7:30 beyond LRP.”

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MOOSE-WILSON ROAD

In the preliminary alternatives, management strategies were presented regarding the physical characteristics of Moose-Wilson Road. These management strategies included paving the unpaved portion of the road; keeping the road at its current width and retaining the unpaved portion; and performing grading, dust abatement, or other routine maintenance. The following provides a summary of comments received, organized around two themes: support or opposition to changes to the width or unpaved nature of Moose-Wilson Road, and other suggested management strategies regarding the physical characteristics of Moose-Wilson Road.

Changes to the Width or Unpaved Nature of Moose-Wilson Road. The National Park Service received opposing comments regarding changes to the width or unpaved nature of Moose-Wilson Road.

Commenters offered a number of arguments supporting retaining Moose-Wilson Road in its current width and keeping the unpaved portion of the road as unpaved (alternative A). Other commenters also supported keeping the road in its current width and unpaved, but with grading and treatment for dust abatement several times a year (alternative C), or other routine maintenance or scheduled road projects (alternative D). These arguments included:

- Maintaining the road as unpaved and at its current width would best preserve the historic character, solitude, scenic, and wildlife values of the road.
- Maintaining the road as unpaved and at its current width would help retain the road's eligibility to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- The current character of the road allows visitors the opportunity to slow down from daily hectic life.
- The current character of the road controls speeding and unsafe passing of vehicles that may endanger humans and wildlife alike.
- The cost of paving and continued maintenance of a paved road would be too high.
- There are already plenty of paved roads in the park and the surrounding area, and the more rustic portions of the park need to be preserved from further development.

Commenters also offered a number of arguments supporting paving the unpaved southern portion of Moose-Wilson Road and making its width consistent with other portions of the road (alternative B). These arguments included:

- Paving the unpaved portion of the road would make the road safer for travel of both motorists and bicyclists by reducing hazardous potholes and ruts that could cause accidents or damage visitors' cars.
- Paving the unpaved portion of the road would allow for easier transit along the road and ease constriction points to two-way traffic.
- Paving the unpaved portion of the road would be the fiscally wise choice and would cut down on the constant maintenance and dust abatement measures of the unpaved road.
- Paving the unpaved portion of the road would benefit the visitor experience and encourage visitors to get out of their cars and bike or walk.
- Paving the unpaved portion of the road could still preserve the slow and rural nature of the road while easing traffic concerns.

“An unpaved section of road will continue to provide visitors with a slow, back country road experience and discourage use by those who just want a relatively quick drive from point A to point B.”

“Even though paving the existing unpaved section would be beneficial, we worry about the additional traffic speeds it would create. The current unpaved road is very effectively in controlling traffic speed through areas where there are several trail crossings.”

“Paving the road will only increase the amount of traffic using this corridor; increase the speed of that traffic; lead to further habitat destruction; cause increased wildlife fatalities; destroy the already weakened sense of wilderness; lead to even further calls for future development of the corridor for the sake of convenience of those commuting through the area.”

“The Moose-Wilson Road should not be completely paved because the currently unpaved section of the road is the only part which has never been paved in the history of the road. This section has an incredible history and feeling, and that should not be changed.”

“By not paving and maintaining the alignment and width of the corridor, speed through the corridor would presumably be less than through a paved corridor (also in Alternative A). This could prevent additional direct wildlife mortality on the road.”

“Paving and/or re-defining the width of the un-paved portions of the road is a bad idea. As it is, the current winding dirt road sends an important message to motorists, especially those coming from the south: this road is not a thoroughfare, it’s a way to experience nature.”

“The road prism itself is an historic asset within the Moose-Wilson Road Corridor and should be preserved as a rustic, low-speed road, seasonal road. The Moose Wilson Road is eligible to be listed on the National Historic Register. Therefore, NPS has a responsibility under all alternatives that emerge from this planning process to assure that the unique historic character of this route is maintained.”

“The gravel section of the road should be paved, as suggested in Alternative B. This section of the road as presently maintained is a disgrace for the Park, and the County. The gravel surface just does not and will not hold up to the amount of traffic, and hasn’t since I have been in Teton Village (1972).”

“Leaving the southernmost 1.8 miles unpaved would be a big mistake. It costs the Park more to grade the potholes three or four times every season, especially after big rains, than to pave it once and be done with it. The apparent main reason for NOT paving it is to minimize traffic. That obviously is a faulty premise since the data indicate a substantial increase in traffic over the last decade. Part of the traffic problem will be obviated by realignment of the north end of the road to intersect with the Chapel Rd. Southbound traffic will have to have Park passes.”

“Any project which does not improve the quality of the existing road is a mistake. As it is currently configured, the dirt portion of the road a hazard to both motorists and cyclists. As it has substantial traffic, it seems to be growing wider and rougher and detracts from any enjoyment of the beautiful scenery and wildlife.”

“The unpaved portion of the Moose-Wilson Road is already disturbed. This portion should be paved, but not widened. Paving the road would reduce the amount of sediment and dust abatement chemicals from entering the streams and Snake River that run through the Corridor.”

“The unpaved portion of the Moose/Wilson Road should be paved as stated in Alternate B. The dust created by the present dirt road covers vegetation along the roadway which is unsightly and detrimental to the plants, not to mention the wear and tear on cars from the pot-holed road.”

“Paving the southern portion of the road should be considered. Please evaluate the effects of paving and having asphalt on the ground (leaching) vs, periodic grading, dust abatement treatments, the noise of traffic on dirt roads, and the effects on the nearby vegetation from dust.”

“Examine the short and long-term of impacts of paving the southern section of the road. While a gravel road may discourage traffic, its impacts in terms of dust and dust-reducing chemicals may, in the long term, be no greater than paving a narrow section of the road in a manner that preserves the rustic character of the road.”

Other Suggested Management Strategies Related to the Physical Characteristics of Moose-Wilson Road.

Some commenters expressed a variety of other management strategies related to the physical characteristics of Moose-Wilson Road that were not presented in the preliminary alternatives. One such strategy presented was to convert the entire length of Moose-Wilson Road to gravel (unpaved) to limit vehicle numbers. A few commenters suggested widening the road for the purpose of accommodating a bike lane on the road adjacent to vehicular traffic (see “Bicycle Use” section of this report). One commenter suggested cutting back vegetation along the edge of the roadway in order to improve drivers’ vision going around sharp curves.

“Rip out the asphalt and maintain as a true western “back road”, with enough rocks and dust to discourage many folks, and slow the rest of them down.”

“Possibly widening the existing road (aside from routing around the wetlands area and still including numerous pullouts) to accommodate safe passage for bicycles would help. But it wouldn’t be ideal, especially with the pot-hole situation on the dirt section which forces bicycle riders into the traffic lanes.”

“...in fact I would support de-paving the entire length of the road. A rough, narrow, winding road would provide a much more authentic experience of historic national park travel (and would restore something of the experience travelers on this road had as recently as 20 or 30 years ago). It would also cut down on traffic, force drivers to slow down, and remove the appeal of the Moose-Wilson Road as a through-way for Teton Village residents racing to the airport.”

MOOSE-WILSON ROAD REALIGNMENT

In the preliminary alternatives, management strategies were presented regarding realignment of two segments of the northern portion of Moose-Wilson Road and changes to the location and number of entrance stations. The following provides a summary of comments received, organized around three themes: (1) support or opposition to the Moose-Wilson Road realignment, (2) comments regarding the variety of management strategies related to the location and number of entrance stations, and (3) other suggested management strategies regarding realignment of Moose-Wilson Road.

Moose-Wilson Road Realignment. Commenters offered a number of arguments in support for and opposition to the realignment of two segments of Moose-Wilson Road as described in alternatives B and D, citing both positive and negative effects related to traffic management, resource protection, and visitor enjoyment of the corridor. Many of the commenters who supported these realignments added the caveat that they would like the realigned sections to be consistent with the slow and winding character of the existing road. Arguments in support for the realignment of Moose-Wilson Road included:

- The proposed road realignment would create a four-way intersection inside the park boundary, will route visitors through the Moose Entrance Station rather than outside, and will reduce wait times and lead to less visitor confusion. This will help promote the notion that the Moose-Wilson corridor is a park road and not a public thoroughfare.
- The proposed road realignment would help avoid the dangerous blind spot on the northernmost hill.
- The proposed road realignment would better protect beaver ponds, fragile riparian habitat, allow for natural processes to recover, and move the road out of the paths that wildlife use to get to water.
- The proposed road realignment would help alleviate common problems with buckling and frost heaves.
- The proposed road realignment would create safer traffic conditions by end the practice of people stopping their cars on the road to see wildlife in the riparian areas and instead encourage people to use newly provided turnouts on the realigned road (away from the beaver ponds) and walk to overlooks to view the riparian area.
- The proposed road realignments would provide more space for construction of a multiuse pathway.
- The proposed road realignments could be achieved with minimal environmental impact by relocating the road segments to already disturbed areas such as the powerline corridor or the old landing strip in the sagebrush east of the Sawmill Ponds.

Commenters also offered a number of arguments in opposition to the realignment of Moose-Wilson Road. These arguments included:

- Any realignment of the road would be expensive, unnecessary, or would take a long time to implement.
- Realignment of the road will disrupt wildlife and destroy additional habitat in the Moose-Wilson corridor, and may reduce the possibilities for visitors to view wildlife.
- Realignment of the road has the potential to disturb archeological resources, affect the eligibility of Moose-Wilson Road for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or have implications for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.
- Similar resource protection could be achieved by road design to encourage slow speeds, rather than through realignment.
- There is no strong justification for road realignment because it seems more to address operational or administrative efficiency rather than resource protection.

“The proposed realignments help decrease congestion and the proposed realignment of the road to the east of the beaver ponds increases protection for wildlife, removes habitat fragmentation and improves connectivity to habitat on the north and east which contains wilderness characteristics.”

“[We] support the Parks proposal to improve wildlife connectivity and wetlands habitat by realigning the northern section of the Moose-Wilson Road to the sage flat, east of the beaver ponds. We believe this will enhance traffic flow while improving wildlife use of the berry patch hillside and wetlands habitat. Making these habitat improvements will likely reduce the frequency and duration of animal jams and the resulting impacts of cars pulling off the road indiscriminately outside of defined pullouts.”

“The 2007 transportation plan included a decision to realign part of the northern section of the road away from sensitive wetland habitat. We assume that present conditions with respect to this decision still warrant realigning the road. Further, realigning the northern entrance of the road (near the Murie Ranch section) to be behind the park entrance station would move the road to less sensitive habitat and reduce the road obstruction for a critical wildlife movement corridor along the Snake River”

“The Moose-Wilson Road is eligible for the national register. We don’t believe it is a viable proposition to make significant changes in the roads alignment given its historic character and its potential listing on the historic register. . . Overall, we don’t see how an alternative that makes major alignment changes is compatible with the national register character of the road”

Other Suggested Management Strategies Related to the Realignment of Moose-Wilson Road. Commenters presented a number of other management strategies related to the realignment of Moose-Wilson Road. One strategy proposed that the road be realigned (alternatives B and D), but for the existing road to be retained either as a wildlife viewing road for vehicle traffic with a slower speed limit or as a bicycle pathway. Other commenters presented alternative alignment options, ranging from minimal to extensive alignment options. Some commenters suggested the inclusion of wildlife under- or overpasses as part of the realigned segments of the roads to ensure habitat connectivity in the corridor.

“...in the northern section where the road is next to the wetlands, I would reroute the through road to the east so it goes through the sage in a straighter line, but I would keep the existing dirt road as a wildlife viewing road with a 15 mph speed limit that is enforced”

“There are similar sage brush meadows to the east and south of the LSR Center. A new Moose Wilson Road through these meadows could be a more effective transportation corridor, extending all the way from the southern park entrance to Moose. Access to LSR could then come from the east instead of the west. The road would be cheaper to improve and maintain in the flat terrain than in the hillside where it now exists and where the proposals have it continuing to exist south of LSR. This alignment is similar to that of the Teton Park Road itself north of Moose and would take traffic away from the more environmentally sensitive area between the mountains and the ponds.”

“I would suggest that there is another alternative, call it E, which would be a better solution than any of the four currently proposed alternatives (A-D). Starting from the south, the road would be rerouted through the open meadows downhill and to the east of the current road. These meadows run northeast from where the pavement stops, just south of the Grand Canyon trailhead, past the Rockefeller Preserve. With the exception of a band of trees north of the Rockefeller preserve this is a relatively open corridor. The North end of this new alignment would then pretty much follow alternative D, although significant savings could probably be realized by joining the Murie Center road, which has already been cut through the trees and graded. I’m assuming that the bike path would follow this same route as the road.”

Entrance Stations on Moose-Wilson Road. The National Park Service received both supportive and opposing comments regarding changes to the entrance stations on Moose-Wilson Road.

Commenters offered a number of arguments supporting retaining the Granite Canyon and Moose entrance stations as they currently exist (alternative A). These arguments included:

- Relocation of existing or construction of new entrance stations would make access to the corridor more cumbersome. This could easily be addressed by adding a few more queuing lanes to the existing stations for pass holders.
- Retaining the existing entrance stations would save construction and additional staffing costs and would not require any additional ground disturbance in the corridor.
- Relocation of existing or construction of new entrance stations seems to address operational or administrative functions and does nothing to achieve the goal statements of the plan related to visitor experience or protection of wildlife.
- Relocation of existing or construction of new entrance stations is unnecessary as those operating the stations should direct visitors with questions to the nearby Moose Visitor Center in order to increase efficiency of the queuing lines.

Commenters offered a number of arguments supporting retaining the Granite Canyon entrance station but relocating and replacing the Moose entrance station (alternative B). These arguments included:

- Relocation and replacement of the Moose entrance station would necessitate that all visitors using the Moose-Wilson corridor to pass through a fee station, therefore reducing casual traffic or commuters driving through the corridor.
- Relocation and replacement of the Moose entrance station would increase efficiency of the entrance station, as it is hoped that additional lanes would be added for navigating the newly designed four-way intersection and for the addition of an express lane for pass holders.
- Relocation and replacement of the Moose entrance station would address operational issues and consolidate staffing without being detrimental to the scenic value or visitor experience such as having two entrance stations at Moose would cause.

Commenters offered a number of arguments supporting retaining the Granite Canyon entrance station but relocating and replacing the Moose entrance station, while also including a new entrance fee station on Moose-Wilson Road (alternatives C and D). These arguments included:

- Relocation and replacement of the Moose entrance station and the addition of a new entrance fee station would necessitate all visitors to the Moose-Wilson corridor pass through a fee station, therefore reducing casual traffic or commuters through the corridor.
- The additional new entrance fee station could serve as an additional information or interpretation kiosk to further educate visitors about protection of the Moose-Wilson corridor.

One other commenter suggested removing both the Granite Canyon and Moose entrance stations completely in order to allow fee-free access to the corridor from both directions.

“Do NOT add an additional entrance station at the Moose end of the road. This idea is even more preposterous than your having added the one at the Teton Village end several years ago. It serves NO purpose whatsoever. You do not collect any additional entrance fees that otherwise would have been missed. The entrance stations should not be used as an information booth - - that’s what the Moose Visitor Center is for. And then there’s the construction costs and the staffing costs - - all for nothing.”

“While I feel it is important to collect entrance fees from visitors accessing the road from the north side, I feel it is easier and has less impact to move the road behind the existing Moose entrance station than to build an additional station. It seems a waste of resources and more expensive in the long term. It will also cut down congestion in Moose if people heading northbound do not have to go through a second entrance station.”

“It would be far cheaper to relocate the existing Moose entrance station to the east of the existing Moose Wilson Road. This would have the additional advantage of slowing traffic through the area around the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center. In fact, maybe the fee station should be on the east side of the Snake River Bridge, thereby also capturing leakage by people accessing the Craig Thomas Center and the river access at Moose without paying the visitor fees. It is not uncommon for the visitor centers at National Parks to be inside of the fee-paying areas. Yellowstone itself is a good example.”

“Put just one road entrance to M-W road across from Chapel Road so it is inside the Park’s fee area [Alt. B]. This will minimize expense of building and staffing an extra entrance station on current road, will avoid day-to-day schedule fluctuations which will be difficult and expensive to administer and extremely frustrating to Park visitors, will clean up the cluster of roads in the Moose/Murie Ranch area, and will cut down on use of M-W as a commuting route for locals who currently enter without impediment from the north end.”

“FOP supports having only one northern entrance station as a way to promote cost savings and streamline road functionality and access.” Friends of Pathways

“One combined entrance station on the northern section of the Moose-Wilson and Teton Park Road should be designed for simplicity, cost efficiency and better visitor service.” Teton Village Association

“We expect that a single entrance station on the northern section at Moose for both the Teton Park Road and the Moose-Wilson Road would be efficient, less costly, less impactful during construction, and less confusing than two entrance points.” Teton County Board of Commissioners

“I would support a single Northern entrance station rather than two separate stations. Ideally such a single park entrance station would be located East of the Snake River bridge such that visitors with lengthy questions can simply be pointed towards the new visitor center as opposed to the current configuration where visitors with questions have already passed the visitors center. Building, maintaining, and staffing dual entrance stations in Moose is not very efficient.”

“The reasons for relocating the Moose entrance are unclear. It appears to be mostly administrative, rather than enhancing the public’s experience or protecting wildlife.”

“It is probably a good idea to change the entrance station to capture more entrance fees. But do we really need two entrance stations to access the park? Perhaps we just need more lanes and personnel at one station.”

“I think you should be able to travel from Wilson to Jenny lake without going through three entrance stations. There should be a way for only one.”

“Actually I’m in favor of leaving it the way it is and taking out the park entrance. Before it was made a park entrance there was not as much traffic especially in the early years we lived here as it was not on the maps as a major road to the park.”

TURNOUTS AND PARKING

In the preliminary alternatives, management strategies were presented regarding turnouts and parking. These management strategies included improving existing turnouts and parking areas or establishing new turnouts along the road, reconfiguring access and parking at Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve, and enhancing and adding additional parking at either end of the road for both summer and winter use. The following provides a summary of comments received organized around support or opposition to strategies dealing with parking availability and the ability to pull off of the road.

Additional Turnouts and Parking Areas. Commenters offered their support for and opposition to management strategies related to parking areas and turnouts presented in the preliminary alternatives. Many commenters urged the development of additional parking and turnouts to alleviate traffic congestion, reduce roadside disturbances, improve safe wildlife viewing opportunities, and to better accommodate existing demand. In particular, commenters recommended additional parking capacity at key destinations within the corridor. Some commenters felt that traffic limits on Moose-Wilson Road might not be necessary if these improvements were to occur.

Those who opposed additional parking and turnouts expressed concerns that it would increase the development footprint within the Moose-Wilson corridor and encourage more use to an already crowded area of the park. Many of these commenters emphasized that the parking lot capacity at the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve Center was purposely designed to provide an uncrowded visitor experience that should continue to be maintained. Some stated their concern for expanding the Death Canyon Trailhead parking lot to accommodate 60 cars as described in all of the preliminary action alternatives (see the Death Canyon comment summary for more information).

Some commenters cautioned against the expansion of too many roadside turnouts. They stated that a limited number of turnouts should be well-defined and strategically placed, especially in wildlife viewing areas that have frequent traffic congestion issues. Others stated that turnouts should be graveled, not paved, and natural barriers should be used to protect surrounding vegetation.

“Increase the amount of pullouts available within the corridor, especially in areas that are regularly congested with wildlife observation.”

“Strategically placed pullouts along the entire corridor are crucial! It’s important that vehicles don’t stop on the road and important the visitors have the opportunity to view wildlife.”

“If there are clearly defined parking places and non-parking measures are taken on the rest of the road, then it might not be necessary to limit traffic on the road.”

“Design the trail head parking and overflow to accommodate the demand. A note on the Granite Canyon parking: I have frequently continued north to other trail heads because that lot is full.”

“Creating gravel pullouts along much of the roadway seems a small price to pay to allow people to love this road and use it as well.”

“Adding capacity to the transport infrastructure only serves to increase human incursion into the area.”

“Parking areas need to be clearly defined and kept from extension by rocks or other permanent barriers to protect the surrounding vegetation.”

“All alternatives contain management options for creating pullouts. We urge a balanced number and location of pullouts that meet visitor expectations while limiting impacts to habitat along the road.”

“Do not build more parking areas and turnouts. Taking beautiful, wooded land to widen a road or create parking lots, is not at all consistent with the goals of preserving this land.”

“I hiked around Phelps lake last weekend and saw almost no one else on the trail even though there was more than a 30 minute wait to get a parking spot. The LSR could easily triple the parking capacity with no significant impact on visitor enjoyment or impact to the environment.”

“The LSR Preserve was purposely designed to limit the number of visitors experiencing the Preserve at one time. The carrying capacity for this unique portion of the park is very low. If the number of people using or visiting the Preserve (all of it, including the main building) exceeds that low capacity, it becomes just another pretty place and the reasons for its creation and management will be lost on the hordes. This is simple, don’t increase visitor capacity at the LSR or you will destroy the real intent of having this generous gift.”

“Parking lots at the Laurance Rockefeller Preserve should remain at the same size level. Parking at the new trailhead in Death Canyon should be limited to 40 cars to reduce impact on that area.”

BICYCLE USE

In the preliminary alternatives, several strategies were presented to manage the use of bicycles within the Moose-Wilson corridor. These strategies ranged from sharing the roadway, to dedicated bicycle access, to construction of a multiuse pathway. The following provides a summary of comments received, organized around three themes: (1) support or opposition to the multiuse pathway; (2) additional suggestions regarding pathway alignment, construction, and operation; and (3) other ideas for managing bicycle and nonmotorized use in the corridor.

Multiuse Pathway. Commenters expressed a range of opinions regarding the construction of a multiuse pathway within the Moose-Wilson corridor (alternative D). Many voiced their support of a full pathway along the length of the road to encourage bicycle and pedestrian use in the area. Arguments in support of the pathway included:

- A dedicated pathway would provide a safe space for bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as a unique visitor experience within the corridor.
- An expansion of bicycle and pedestrian access would reduce the number of vehicles entering the corridor, resulting in less pollution, noise, and congestion.
- This segment of pathway would complete the “Grand Loop” of pathways and generate increased tourism in Jackson Hole.
- Opportunities for interpretation and education could be expanded along the pathway.
- A pathway would accommodate bicyclists with a wide range of ages and skill levels, as well as people with mobility challenges.
- A multiuse pathway encourages physical activity and fitness.
- The slow and narrow character of the roadway could be maintained if bikes were moved off the roadway and did not need to share the road with vehicles.

Other commenters said that a multiuse pathway is inappropriate within the Moose-Wilson corridor. Arguments against the pathway included:

- Construction of a pathway would impact park resources and wildlife habitat, degrade historic character, and diminish the unique visitor experience that exists within the corridor.
- Bicyclists have many other pathways in the area that are underutilized and another is not needed within this sensitive area.
- A pathway would increase the potential for human-wildlife conflict, interrupt wildlife migration patterns, and fragment habitat.
- A pathway would be unsafe, as pedestrians could disturb potentially dangerous wildlife like bears and moose that frequent the corridor.
- Traffic congestion issues would not be solved by a pathway and ridership would not justify the monetary or environmental costs of pathway construction.
- Bicyclists along the pathway could create conflict with other user groups, including horseback riders.
- The addition of a bike path would affect the road’s eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

“A bike path would insure the safety of visitors to the park who choose to ride their bikes by giving them a safe space where they wouldn’t be threatened by cars on blind corners.”

“There are miles and miles of bicycle lanes without having to add Moose Wilson Road to them. This would keep the road strictly for Wildlife Viewing, and would significantly improve Moose and other wildlife sustainability in the area.”

“We have wonderful bike paths and trails throughout the park and we don’t need to change this wonderful area to accommodate walkers and cyclists. They can use the corridor, as they have for years, to walk and cycle.”

“Particularly in the case of the Visitor Experience Alternative D would best engage the largest number of people in the experience of the corridor. There is a huge difference between walking or cycling through an ecosystem and driving through in a motor vehicle. Given that most people never get more than 500 feet from the parking lot when visiting a National Park, providing a multi-use path through the corridor would provide an entirely different experience for visitors.”

“Without a pathway, it is not possible to enjoy the beauty of the area outside of a car. A pathway will encourage users to park and use non-motorized transportation, thus, decreasing congestion on the roadway. Currently, pedestrians or cyclist must traverse the existing narrow road which is very dangerous. In addition, a pathway segment would tie Moose and the Village together. This would complete a world class pathway system loop, where a pathway user can travel from Jackson north to the park along hwy 89 then return to Jackson via the Moose-Wilson road and Village Pathway. This would be a rare privilege and the attraction to tourist and locals should not be under estimated.”

“Defenders urges the Park to reassess impacts that the addition of a separate bike path will have on grizzly bears and those traveling in bear country. Bicyclists moving along a well maintained bike path can travel quickly and quietly. This can result in sudden encounters between bicyclists and grizzly bears.”

“I do not think there should be a bicycle path on the Moose Wilson Rd as it is one of the last pristine areas left in our area. If you look at the transportation results, most people were using the road as a means to get to the other end or the airport. I do not feel that the amount of trees, the disruption to the animals and the amount of asphalt is worth it.”

“Those of us who enjoy bicycling have recently benefitted by the addition of dozens of miles of pathways in Teton County, many in the Park, and in areas that have superb vistas and which are much safer and less disruptive to animals than a path would be in the Moose-Wilson corridor.”

“I support Alternative D as the preferred option. It will encourage Park visitors to get out of their cars and experience GTNP in an intimate way. It will also provide safe access to families on bikes, disabled people in wheelchairs and other visitors, while potentially reducing vehicular traffic on the Moose-Wilson Road.”

“I strongly favor Alternative D as it provides the multi use pathway which we so desperately need. If this pathway is created we would establish one of the great cycling venues in the world and create an entire new dynamic for people to visit the Park. By having a pathway that would have an entire loop from Jackson north to Antelope Flats, over to Jenny Lake and then back to the existing pathway at the Teton Village entrance would be both unique and extraordinary. This would make GTNP an even more special place than it already is and in a very positive way.”

“We would argue that there is no compelling reason to construct a new, separate, paved pathway along the roadway. The pathway is a facility promoted by a small, articulate, politically capable group that represents a very small user group. Use on the pathway along the Moose-Wilson Road would be primarily recreational. The Park Service organic act and supporting laws direct the service to protect the wildlife and the natural and cultural resources of the park. . . Building it would run counter to the stated goals of this EIS to maintain and restore the parks habitats and ecosystems along this corridor, allow natural process to continue and in general maintain the natural and historic setting of this area of the park.”

“The Moose Wilson Road has been determined eligible to the National Register, and the realignment of the road and the addition of a bike path would make the road ineligible to the National Register.”

“We have changed our minds from wanting a bike path and road improvement to wanting the park to stay as natural as possible. We can save our driving and cycling adventures for other areas. Please preserve the area for the wildlife.”

“I feel strongly that a separate multi-use pathway would be to the great detriment of the Moose-Wilson corridor. Constructing such a path would create an effective barrier to wildlife stretching from the outside of the existing road to the outside of the new pathway; the small strip of habitat between the two would be fragmented to such a degree that large animals would be unable to use it. . . There are plenty of existing bike paths in Jackson Hole, and this is a location too valuable in other aspects to be commercialized solely for bicyclists’ benefit.”

Multiuse Pathway Alignment, Construction, and Operation. Many commenters provided additional input on alignment, construction, and operation of a multiuse pathway in the corridor. These suggestions included:

- Creating slower speeds for bicycles on the pathway to avoid conflicts with other bicyclists, pedestrians, or wildlife
- Using design solutions that accommodate the character of the corridor and/or encourage lower speeds (e.g., unpaved, single-track, etc.).
- Enacting strategies to manage/restrict usage during periods of peak wildlife activity (e.g., time of day, season, etc.)
- Using an alternate, resource-sensitive alignment for the multiuse pathway, possibly along the levee west of the Snake River, over areas with existing ground disturbance, or through the sagebrush east of the roadway.
- Requiring no or reduced park entrance fees for bicycle or pedestrian travel.
- Requiring bicyclist registration or fee permits, as well as the use of helmets.

“I would strongly support use of the existing Snake River dike and portions of the circumference road within the LSR center as a multi-use human powered travel path as the dike is an entirely man-made structure built and maintained via taxpayer dollars. In terms of environmental impact a multi-use path on such an artificial structure makes more sense to me than felling trees to widen a road or build a path.”

“Do all that you can to make it easier for walkers and bicyclists. A reduced park entrance fee for citizens not taking a vehicle past a certain point makes sense.”

“Expand the previously proposed and approved separated pathway along the southern portion of the road to include the entire length of the road with context-sensitive design and construction, and approach management of the pathway with same adaptive management strategies proposed for the road.”

“I am marginally in favor of a separate bike path, a few feet off the road. I am afraid such a bike path might simply encourage serious distance bikers to go all out, from the Village into the Park, endangering casual bikers and unwary wildlife not used to a pedaled vehicle going 20 or 30 miles an hour.”

“The D alternative at the present time only presents a pathway which has lots of impact making it a less desirable one. Another alternative could be minimal realignment/construction of the main road with unimproved turnouts and a pathway designed with minimal disturbances.”

“Wildlife adapts as park studies have show. And the pathway can be placed in an environmentally sensitive way over existing interior roads or on already disturbed land from when the park installed fiber optic cable lines on the corridor. Large numbers of trees do not have to be cut down. That is just a myth of the opponents to a pathway.”

Horseback Riders Opposition to New Multiuse Pathway. Commenters raised concerns that the new multiuse pathway in alternative D would have substantial negative effects on horseback riding opportunities and experiences in the corridor, as well as negative effects on natural resources that contribute to the horseback riding experience. Some commenters called out Sawmill Ponds as an area where a new pathway would have particular negative effects on horse use. Some comments also noted the pathway alignment constraint near the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve and the problematic trail-building needs that would result.

“Horseback riding trails throughout Teton County have slowly been taken over by bike trails, creating potential dangerous conflicts.”

“As much as I love bicycle paths, I don’t feel this corridor is an appropriate location to have one. Commercial horseback riding provided by the dude ranches in the area provide a very important and historical function with few side effects over the decades they have been in operation.”

“Do not stop horseback trail riding in the Sawmill Ponds area and do not build a bike lane on the Moose-Wilson road. I have enjoyed trail riding in the Sawmill Ponds area and feel the area should be left as pristine animal habitat. I do not think bicycles would mix with the abundant wildlife in the area surrounding Moose-Wilson road. Horses do not alarm wildlife...people on bicycles could be potentially dangerous if the unpaved road were paved- -encouraging speeding of cars and bikes.”

“But if you actually DO put a bike trail through the park on the Moose-Wilson Rd. it will destroy everything about horseback riding in the park. Accidents WILL happen as horses are ‘spooked’ by the bike riders and you will certainly ruin the quiet beauty of riding horseback in the Tetons!!!! PLEASE DO NOT ruin this beautiful natural riding venue by putting a bike trail on Moose-Wilson Rd.!!!!”

“After studying the plans, I am concerned about two goals in the Alternatives since they may alter our enjoyment and experiences on the trails that makes ranch life so special. Specifically, creating bicycle pathways along the Moose-Wilson Road and phasing out commercial horseback riding on the Sawmill Pond trails.”

“It would appear that your constraint is that a new side-path cannot be added through the LSRP. This forces you into expanded precedents of bad and worse added path options to the east. Two major problems with Alternative D: Last fall you eliminated the primary horse trail through the meadow connecting the new diversion ditch bridge to the LSRP, and you re-routed the horse traffic onto the Cheney Highway. Now you are putting the bikers on this same stretch of the Cheney. And this is essentially your only option beyond using the existing M-W Rd for this stretch. Secondly, with the LSRP topography and the marsh on its east end, the only way to go from Poker Flats to Wister Draw or White Grass is the horse trail east of LSRP and then linking to the horse trail coming out of the old RLazyS going to M-W RD near the LSRP driveway. This sole horse trail exit is where you are overlaying the bike trail in Alternative D. Thus separating the horse riders from the bikers will require several new trail segments, and the major bridge on the Cheney Highway will probably have to be shared... This is an exceptional amount of natural habitat to be converted into new trails. We think that keeping the cyclists on the M-W Rd though the LSRP eliminates the above problems for us. And we think, with study, such a solution should be within reach.”

Additional Strategies for Bicycle and Nonmotorized Use. While many commenters offered support or opposition for the pathway as proposed in alternative D, others had differing suggestions for accommodating nonmotorized use within the corridor. Many commenters said that if nonmotorized traffic continues to share the road with vehicles, conditions would need to change to safely accommodate those users. Specific suggestions included reducing speed limits, installing educational signage, improving the road surface, widening the road, adding bike lane(s), and implementing a one-way traffic strategy to allow extra room for bicycles. Many suggested that bicycle use could be accommodated through implementing periodic road closures and shuttle services as presented in the preliminary alternatives (see Traffic and Commercial sections).

Some commenters suggested eliminating vehicular use from the road entirely or rerouting the Moose-Wilson Road—using the existing roadway as a dedicated space for nonmotorized uses. Alternately, other commenters suggested that if a pathway is not constructed bicycle traffic should be eliminated altogether—citing risk of sudden encounters with wildlife and potential conflicts with passing traffic.

Further suggestions included a single-track dirt path for mountain biking, dedicated nonmotorized access during seasonal closures, an option for a partial pathway, and a bike lane along realigned portions of the road.

“Other options, including one-way traffic or road closures, could allow safe pedestrian and bicycling use within the existing road prism.”

“I would strongly support use of the existing Snake River dike and portions of the circumference road within the LSR center as a multi-use human powered travel path as the dike is an entirely man-made structure built and maintained via taxpayer dollars. In terms of environmental impact a multi-use path on such an artificial structure makes more sense to me than felling trees to widen a road or build a path.”

“The existing road could easily become the bike path. The unpaved portions could simply be paved to the width of a bike path. This would be far cheaper, and better, than building a new bike path and removing the existing road.”

“By reducing speeds and limiting the number of cars that are passing through the corridor, visitors should be able to safely bike the road. Sharing the road with cars would also offer a small amount of safety to bikers in the event of a dangerous wildlife encounter.”

“I would like to see the roadway moved towards the Snake River and then use the existing roadway as the multiuse pathway. My thought is that the new roadway could be constructed as such that there are better pull-outs for wildlife viewing, more thought to wildlife corridors and completely paved. The multiuse pathway could then use existing road surface for its construction.”

“I do not support an additional lane of pavement for bicycles or realignment of the road. If the road is managed as “one way” for cars, bicycles can travel safely in either direction on the existing road.”

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Commercial uses within the corridor varied among preliminary alternatives by both type of activity and magnitude. Major topics included commercial tours, taxis, horseback riding, and shuttle service. Commenters had a range of opinions regarding these topics. The following provides a summary of comments received organized around four themes: (1) general commercial use, (2) shuttle services and commercial transportation, (3) taxi use, and (4) commercial horse use.

General Commercial Use. Commenters expressed varying opinions on allowing commercial activity on Moose-Wilson Road. Some commenters suggested that reducing or eliminating commercial uses would be an approach that could prevent resource impacts and improve traffic and safety, while others thought that it is appropriately handled as currently managed. There were also recommendations that certain nonmotorized tours and activities that do not affect traffic flow should be allowed, but other, more intrusive uses should be restricted. Other suggestions included:

- Eliminating pass-through commercial traffic.
- Suggesting alternative routes for commercial activities (e.g., US Route 189).
- Training and/or permitting process for commercial uses.
- Collecting a special fee for commercial traffic.
- Allowing for park-run tours and services rather than private commercial traffic.
- Regulating commercial use through concession contracts.

“Commenters also expressed concern with the larger potential for commercialization of the corridor beyond specific commercial activities. They felt that commercialization would interfere with the long-term sustainability of the corridor as a place to experience and enjoy nature.”

Not allowing taxis or other commercial vehicles—It doesn’t improve the park experience to see them. I think the wildlife expeditions type of tours should only be allowed at certain times of the day and be very limited in scope and size.”

“As listed in multiple plans, I think that commercial vehicles and taxis should be prohibited from using the road. Small wildlife viewing tours with permits should be allowed, but should be restricted where they can park due to the width of the road (turnouts only). I like the idea of all the non-motorized tours, painting courses, etc as long as they do not affect the traffic (i.e. bikes blocking the whole lane for the entirety of their trip preventing cars from passing).”

“Generally speaking, the strategies that reduce or eliminate use of the road as a commuter route should be carried forward. Heavy use of the road for through-travel underlies almost all the problems in the corridor and is the greatest threat to Park resources.”

“Commercial traffic is not a big issue on the Moose-Wilson. Oversized vehicles such as buses and trucks are not allowed. Pickup trucks used for business with drivers having a valid park pass are permitted to use the road. Taxi cabs use the road and the visitors in the cab are charged an entrance fee.”

“Tour operators are the safest pilots of the Moose-Wilson corridor, yet we feel we have been the subject of the most scrutiny. We are constantly passed by aggressive drivers while operating on the Moose-Wilson Corridor, and the majority of those drivers are locals either trying to get to work in the park or going to recreate. The majority of the tourists we see on the road are the safest drivers, mainly because the narrowness and unfamiliarity of the road forces them drive cautiously.”

“The Park has contributed to the MWR problem by allowing so many companies to utilize these roads. Often these tour operators are among the worst offenders of poor driving and if they slow down or pull over, because of their expert status, other tourists follow suit.”

Shuttle Services and Commercial Transportation (excluding taxis). Many commenters were supportive of the idea of alternative transportation being used within the Moose-Wilson corridor. Commenters suggested that a shuttle or other alternative transportation system should be refined to include more details than those presented in the preliminary alternatives. Many commenters provided specific suggestions for how alternative systems could be used. Commenters believe an alternative transportation system will improve visitor experience and alleviate traffic concerns. Others contend that private vehicles are not appropriate in the corridor. Additionally, some commenters thought that private traffic should be reduced or restricted and replaced with a limited number of commercial vehicles during periods of high visitation. Others said that they did not like this idea, as they would need to pay a commercial provider to get access to the roadway.

“Although the NPS alternatives mention the use of a future small shuttle system, I encourage the park service to develop a more definitive plan that outlines how shuttle buses will be used to decrease traffic impacts.”

“Another possibility would be to offer a shuttle bus for people who are visiting and/or utilizing the area. For example, those who are hiking the Death Canyon trail could park at the main Visitor Center and ride the shuttle to the trailhead. This would remove some vehicle traffic. Personal vehicle traffic could still be allowed (which would not affect through traffic). Having visited Zion N.P. before and after implementation of the shuttle buses, I find using the shuttle buses convenient and less stressful. Zion isn’t a perfect analogy, but it has some similarities.”

“I love shuttle service in other parks and strongly encourage its use in this special area.”

“Reduce congestion. Provide access to alternative forms of transportation. We need to stop being so dependent and focused on vehicular use.”

“the NPS alternatives mention the use of a future small shuttle system, I would like to see you develop a more definitive plan that outlines how shuttle buses will be used to decrease traffic impacts.”

“Buses should be used so there is not so much pollution and noise from cars - this is their home - not ours.”

“I strongly encourage the implementation of a frequent shuttle bus service (buses to be powered by natural gas) from the south entrance that would also give departing visitors connectivity to a second airport shuttle, based at the moose visitor center. Without some involvement of a mass transit system, we will be missing the boat!”

“Consider having some kind of public transportation shuttles that would reduce the number of vehicles, such as in use in Zion, Yosemite, not to replace automobiles but to supplement. Perhaps these could be open-air and could have an educational aspect (maybe rangers could provide interpretation along the way and at stops).”

“Public transit/shuttle option along Moose-Wilson Road. The START Green Line already has 17 round-trips per day along the southern portion of Moose-Wilson Road. A partnership between the NPS and Town of Jackson could extend some of those trips to serve Granite Canyon Trailhead, LSR Preserve and the Craig Thomas Discovery Center. Grand Teton is lagging behind other parks in offering innovative public transit.”

“If vehicle traffic is now as heavy as it sounds like it has become, a possibility to at least consider would be no access by private vehicles and just allow a limited number of park or concessionaire tour vehicles per day during the busy season.”

“In order to distinguish public transportation from private shuttles, we suggest that NPS reserve the potential for public transportation (Transit) as a separate category in all Adaptive Management measures, rather than in the “Commercial Activity” category.”

“Park authorized shuttle service, especially with an interpretive guide, should be a key feature of any future management plan for the corridor. Such public transportation would help reduce traffic levels and therefore impacts to wildlife.”

Taxi Use. Commenters expressed opinions on a variety of approaches to taxi use along Moose-Wilson Road, which varied among alternative from no restriction on taxi use (alternative A), to taxi permitting (alternative C), to prohibition of taxis (alternatives B and D). Commenters also expressed a range of opinions on the issue. Certain commenters felt that taxis should be limited or prohibited entirely (alternatives B and D), many citing that the road is often used as a shortcut to other area destinations and drivers speed to reach their destination. Others, however, thought that taxis should be allowed (alternatives A and C) because they provide a service to park visitors who might not have access to a personal vehicle.

“A great deal of the use is by people who want to visit and utilize the Park without renting a car. The Park seems unaware that taxis provide a service to its visitors far beyond simply hauling commuters between the Village and the airport.”

“Alternatives A and C allow taxis to use this corridor. The Moose-Wilson Road is not a transportation corridor; it is a park destination. We do not believe taxi transport is in line with park’s objectives.”

“Defenders would like to see a limit or restriction on taxis and other through-traffic. Alternative B and D provide some prohibitions on commercial traffic including taxis. We feel this is an appropriate approach worth exploring further.”

Commercial Horse Use. Commenters had a range of opinions on commercial horse use within the Moose-Wilson Corridor. Some thought that restricting commercial horse trips was a good idea because they can damage trails and generate more noise than noncommercial users (alternatives B and C restrict commercial horseback riding at Sawmill Ponds). Other commenters said that it should continue to be allowed as currently managed (alternatives A and D), as horseback riding is a unique experience in the corridor that is minimally impactful on the natural environment. Some also said that commercial horseback riding should continue since it is a traditional use associated with the history and culture of the area.

“Dude ranching and horseback riding are part of Jacksons history and culture and this moose-wilson road area with it’s beautiful trails and trees and wildlife is it’s Gem. Eliminating commercial horseback riding anywhere in this area will prevent scores of youngsters and curious wildlife lovers from experiencing the grandeur of the park in the most unique of ways on horseback. “

“The prohibition of reduction of horseback riding (whether private or commercial) through parts of Teton National Park will negatively impact the enjoyment of many; this is the primary purpose of our visits to this area.”

“Closing commercial horseback riding on the Sawmill Pond Trails is also unwise. It is a unique area of the park which allows horseback riding without causing conflicts with other park goals. Commercial horseback riding has been going on in this area of the park for over ninety years with minimal conflicts and minimal requirement of park management.”

“I cannot at all agree with commercial facilitation, including that of commercial horse trips. In ALL NPs which I have visited, wilderness areas, and other public lands, these concessionaires damage trails severely, commonly build oversize camps inappropriately and unlawfully, and make considerably more noise than noncommercial users.”

DEATH CANYON

In the preliminary alternatives, several strategies were presented for managing Death Canyon. These strategies included reconfigurations and improvements to trailhead parking, improvements or additions to access by road, relocation of the trailhead, and changes to visitor amenities. The following provides a summary of comments received, organized around four themes: (1) support or opposition to alternative B strategies, (2) support or opposition to alternative C, (3) support or opposition to alternative D strategies, and (4) comments regarding the Death Canyon Trailhead parking lot expansion that was proposed under each of the preliminary action alternatives.

Alternative B Strategies for Death Canyon. Those who supported alternative B stated that relocating the trailhead parking lot to the junction of White Grass Road would eliminate the need for two parallel roads, restore habitat that has been heavily impacted by vehicles, and add an additional mile of hiking trail for visitors—thereby making Death Canyon a more remote, backcountry destination. Those in opposition to alternative B stated that relocating the parking lot would extend hiking times making it more difficult to access the backcountry for day hiking and climbing.

“Move the parking for the Death Canyon Trailhead as close to the Moose Wilson road as possible (alternative B). The heavy traffic on the current dirt road is unnecessary. Move the parking lot close to the main corridor, and visitors can enjoy an extra mile of hiking through a beautiful area. There are shorter hikes from the Lawrence Rockefeller Preserve for visitors that are not able to complete the longer hike.”

“I think that moving the Death Canyon trailhead to the White Grass Road junction, as proposed in Alternative B, is a good idea. The road to the current trailhead deteriorates severely after it turns to dirt, and moving the trailhead will make Death Canyon more remote and more desirable as a hiking destination.”

“We encourage the park to strongly consider managing the Death Canyon trailhead using the strategy specified in Alternative B. This reduces impacts of visitors along the unpaved section of the road, while allowing ample visitor access to trails and hiking opportunities.”

“Relocating the Death Canyon trailhead to the end of the paved section of the access road is another feature of Alternative B that would clearly benefit wildlife by eliminating motor vehicle use and its associated impacts to the surrounding habitat along a 1-mile section of the corridor.”

“I very much disagree with several aspects of Alternative B. Closing the road to the Death canyon trailhead would make the hike to Phelps overlook 4 miles round trip. This length would make it difficult for many people to complete, particularly elderly. In addition, it would add 1 or 2 miles to all other hikes and make some of them, such as up to Static Peak and back, not doable as a day hike.”

“Moving it back one mile would significantly impact a great first hike for toddlers.”

“Adding a mile to the front end of the approach to the some of the classic Death Canyon climbing routes does raise some concerns. Climbers start hiking early as it is so that they can do the approach and climb the multi-pitch climbs and get off before afternoon storms hit. With an additional mile to hike, climbers would have to start that much earlier, possibly have more wildlife interactions, or if they didn’t start early enough perhaps be dealing with more afternoon storm exposure.”

Alternative C Strategies for Death Canyon. Commenters who supported alternative C stated that improving Death Canyon Road and maintaining the relative location of the trailhead parking lot would be the least intrusive for visitors. Those who opposed alternative C stated that relocating the parking lot 0.4 miles from the trailhead would be an added burden for some day hikers and it could negatively affect the historic character of the White Grass Ranch Historic District. Others stated that maintaining two access roads, one for the public to the Death Canyon Trailhead and one for administrative use to White Grass Ranch is unnecessary and redundant.

“Of the Death Canyon trailhead alternatives, C is best. Improve the road/parking area and maintain access near the current location.”

“I think that the road to the Death Canyon Trail head trailhead should be improved to a single lane with periodic pullouts for passing. This leaves the distance of all hikes the same as it is now.”

“Moving the Death Canyon trailhead farther east as in either Plans B or C would add either 0.4 or 1.0 miles to the approach. While this is not much for campers intending to overnight in the range, it is a considerable burden- -0.8 or 2.0 miles roundtrip- -to anyone trying to do an already challenging one-day hike or climb.”

“Please don’t double up on the Death Canyon/White Grass access roads [Alt. C]. This is expensive, and doubles the vehicle impact on a quiet corner of the Park.”

“A parking lot should not be built within the viewshed of White Grass because this will negatively impact the historic character of the ranch.”

Alternative D Strategies for Death Canyon. Commenters who supported alternative D asserted that it provides the nearest, most consolidated access for visitors to both the Death Canyon Trailhead and White Grass Ranch and it eliminates the need for two parallel roads through the area. Commenters who opposed this alternative stated that public vehicular access through the White Grass Ranch would alter the unique character of this historic district. Others suggested that White Grass Road should be closed and rehabilitated and instead, public and administrative access should be combined on Death Canyon Road.

“Make one Death Canyon/White Grass access road [Alt. D]. This will cut down on having two parallel roads in the small area, will reduce maintenance expense, and will integrate White Grass into public perception instead of leaving it out there as a secret alcove.”

“Public enjoyment and appreciation of the historic White Grass Ranch should be encouraged.”

“Providing access to the existing Death Canyon trailhead via the Whitegrass road would be a much better location for the road, and would serve recreation better than the existing road that is hard to negotiate with frequent deep puddles, etc. Using Whitegrass road would also improve opportunities for interpreting the historic structures there and giving access to the Valley Trail. I prefer to leave the Death Canyon parking area where it is rather than disturb more ground for a new spot.”

“The White Grass Road should not be used for access to Death Canyon because this will negatively impact the ranch’s cultural landscape and this dirt road will eventually see the same degradation as the current Death Canyon dirt road. Also, a parking lot should not be built within the viewshed of White Grass because this will negatively impact the historic character of the ranch.”

“The reopening of the White Grass Road was undertaken as part of the rehabilitation of the property to reestablish historic access and the historic landscape and to provide limited administrative access. This historic route was not built to accommodate the volume of traffic that will correspond to the planned parking area, and at most, current traffic counts are not more than a few cars a day. We strenuously object to this part of Alternative D, because if adopted in conjunction with the parking recommendation, it would mean that all trailhead-bound traffic will intrusively cross through the Historic District, altering its setting, feeling and association and changing the character by the introduction of numerous vehicles and associated noise, dust, etc.”

“The National Park Service might consider abandoning the White Grass access road and combining access to Death Canyon and the White Grass cabins along the southern road. The commission prefers the proposal to combine the access roads as described in Alternative D., but suggests analyzing an alternative alignment in Alternative C.”

Enlarged Parking Lot at Death Canyon. While many commenters welcomed additional parking at the Death Canyon Trailhead, some questioned the need for an expanded 60-car parking lot, as described in each of the preliminary action alternatives. One commenter suggested that dispersed parking is preferable to a large concentrated parking lot in order to retain the historic setting of the area. Others stated that the parking lot should include dedicated spaces for horse trailers and overnight backpackers.

“The road to the trail head is definitely in need of improvement and there’s never enough parking anywhere near the trail head.”

“Enlarge the parking at death canyon trailhead so people don’t park illegally.”

“We are very uncomfortable with the notion of adding a large, formalized lot holding 60 cars which we believe has the potential to impact the setting of the White Grass National Register District. While we understand concerns about congestion and parking in the Moose-Wilson Corridor, we feel that more disbursed parking, rather than parking concentration, is preferable to retain the setting and feeling of the area.”

“I question, though, the proposal to expand parking to 60 vehicles. That number of people on the trail may detract from the backcountry experience that people may seek on these trails. Using the Rockefeller Preserve parking lot model, it may be better to limit the parking at these areas than to try to accommodate demands at any one time.”

“A 60 car parking lot for Death Canyon-White Grass Area (Alt B,C,D) will encourage heavy traffic on the road.”

“The addition of 60 parking lots seems excessive, but we are not sure how much of an addition over the current capacity this is. It would be nice to know.”

“Provide for overnight [parking] slots for those with back-country permits.”

“There should also be [horse] trailer parking at White Grass.”

WINTER ACCESS AND USE

A variety of comments relating to winter use within the Moose-Wilson corridor were received. Comments covered topics of grooming the Moose-Wilson Road, potential impacts from visitor use on wildlife and habitat, backcountry access, and appropriate levels of winter use.

Grooming Unplowed Portions of Moose-Wilson Road. Commenters were both supportive and opposed to proposals of winter grooming of unplowed portions of Moose-Wilson Road in alternative D.

For commenters who support grooming during the winter, the ability to cross-country ski was often cited as well as the following reasons:

- Allowing more people to appreciate and use the park, and in turn, increase the number of people who would have interest protecting park values.
- An enhanced winter use that supports the NPS mission.
- Limited environmental impact of groomed skiing and snowshoeing areas.
- Lack of opportunity for beginner skiers in the Moose-Wilson corridor (who cannot yet manage *setting one's own path*).

For commenters who oppose grooming during the winter, this activity is not appropriate for this area for the following reasons:

- Increased negative impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat during an already stressed time of year for wildlife.
- Degradation of rustic, natural, and backcountry winter setting/experience of the Moose-Wilson corridor.
- Grooming being in conflict with national park objectives.
- Abundance of other nearby options for groomed cross-country skiing experiences.
- Opening the door for incremental increases to winter use in the corridor.
- Negative effects on natural soundscape and natural setting from grooming machines.
- Grooming operations cost and staffing limitations for NPS.

“Ensure that winter grooming is available along the Moose Wilson Road. Groomed XC skiing would allow more people to appreciate and use the park, and grow the number of people who can appreciate and protect Park values.”

“I think efforts to enhance winter use of the area with ski trail grooming on the unplowed road and better parking are both desirable and appropriate to the park service mission. This is the type of use we need to foster in this beautiful area.”

“Groom the road for xc skiing in winter. I guide xc ski tours from Granite Canyon through Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. Most of my clients have never xc skied before. While a more advanced skier can break trail and ski on ungroomed areas, this is EXTREMELY difficult for a beginner. To keep access to the park available to non-skiers or beginner skiers in the winter (which is the majority of people visiting from outside of Jackson), we need a groomed road where visitors can learn how to ski before trying more difficult trails. Without a groomed path, winter access will be limited to local skiers.”

“Groom the road for cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. Minimal environmental impact.”

“The park should continue traditional non-motorized winter access without grooming. This would maintain the corridor’s winter solitude, provide a more primitive visitor experience than elsewhere (Teton Park Road), and would better protect critical winter moose habitat.”

“This corridor is similar to a “back country” experience, we do not see “groomed runs” when skiing the back country.”

“We request NPS maintain an un-groomed winter trail system to limit disturbance of wildlife and provide for winter respite during a season where wildlife must conserve energy for survival. The existing use is already high, and adding additional trail users will create conflicts between users and increase use of the area, and impacts on wildlife. This also provides a quieter winter experience for visitors snowshoeing and cross-country skiing through the corridor.”

“No grooming of the road in winter. Keep it rustic and natural as there are other places for groomed winter use.”

“Do not allow winter grooming of the Moose-Wilson road – Although I am an avid cross-country skier, I do not support winter grooming on the MW road. I regularly skate (or try to but it is often not groomed) on the inside highway between Taggart Bradley parking lot and Signal Mountain. GTNP does not have the funds to groom this road and already relies on private donations and the County to groom it. Why allow for another use that the park cannot maintain? There are already many places to ski along groomed trails in the area. Let’s leave the MW road for quiet, slow exploration uninterrupted by the disturbance of grooming machines.”

“Enhanced winter recreational opportunities are not appropriate. The corridor is critical moose habitat. Its use should be further restricted rather than expanded. The Snake River bottomlands through the corridor should be closed, and grooming and/or guiding should not be employed to draw more people.”

Enhanced Winter Access to Backcountry. Some commenters explicitly noted that maintaining or improving backcountry access along the Moose-Wilson corridor should be a management priority. Commenters typically focused on road plowing and trailhead parking availability along the corridor. Commenters listed the notable logistical and prohibitive effects that certain winter road closures would have on backcountry access and recreation opportunities in the corridor and beyond. Generally, commenters who spoke on this subject oppose winter use management strategies in alternatives B and C (actively reducing access by moving winter trailheads closer to corridor entrance) or suggested winter use enhancements beyond what is proposed in alternative D (e.g., fat-tire snow bikes, winter access to the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve, extend plowing from the Moose end of the corridor to White Grass Road intersection, etc.).

“I am very opposed to any of the strategies that reduce access to the Park, especially the backcountry. Whether these be relocating trailheads further away (as in B) or reducing access to the trailheads during certain days (as in C) or shortening the season by closing the road even earlier than now (as in C) or relocating winter trailheads further away (as in B and C), none address the real problem and all alienate those of us who use and love the Park the most.”

“Plow the northern part of the road to white grass road intersection in winter to allow access to popular backcountry skiing.”

“Access to the Death Canyon Trailhead should not be restricted in the winter months. This is a popular destination for backcountry skiers and hikers. The ability to enjoy these areas in the winter is important to the local community and helps to foster the conservation ethic that is such an integral part of this community and certainly benefits the National Park. For the relative few that wish to enjoy access to Death Canyon in the winter, it is wrong to restrict access and is not in line with the goals and purpose of the National Park.”

“The winter plowing plan included in Alternative D is also superior to the other plans because it maintains the current plowing policies, allowing backcountry skiers to access peaks in the southern part of the range.”

“Grooming the unplowed section of roadway in winter is an excellent idea. As an ardent user of Death Canyon road / trailhead in Winter, I support the reconfiguring the winter parking aspect.”

“Winter closure of M-W Road at Murie center is a bad idea. This effectively cuts off winter access to the Death Canyon area and the popular ski destination of Wimpy’s and Mt. Albright. The winter plowing of the road should continue to the Death Canyon trailhead road as it currently does.”

“The winter elements of preliminary Alternatives B and C should not be carried forward. Only those strategies for winter use and access as outlined in Alternatives A and D, as well as other potential strategies devised by the Agency or recommended by the public, should be carried forward for detailed analysis.”

“Winter Access is a big issue if winter plowing stops other than at current places. Death canyon is an important and popular backcountry ski location (Teton traverses, the south end of Maverick, Aibright, Banana Couloir, Olive Oyl). To add a roundtrip of 6 miles more would make this historic and important activity more than most could handle. A resulting impact would be a shifting of skier use to the Taggart parking area, which already sees heavy use (both in the parking lot, and on the ski terrain accessed from here, such as the north end of Maverick, 25 short, and other places). Other winter uses such as iceskating on Phelps Lake and ice climbing on Prospectors would become quite difficult, if 3 miles each way were to be added. Please do not effectively end these traditional winter uses of the Death Canyon area. I support the gentler activities closer to the road that a place like the LRP caters to, but please be aware that many of us are able to go far deeper into the mountains, and we are experiencing the Tetons in a magnificent way. Be careful not to constrain this type of user.”

“To further improve Alt D, in the winter seasons, allowed use should include pedestrians, skiers, people on fat bikes and snowshoes these all need to be considered as part of nonmotorized human powered access that needs to be provided to GRTE. Wyoming Pathways specifically requests that a strategy of Fat Bike access be included on groomed roads and the Moose-Wilson pathway in winter.”

“The winter plowing plan included in Alternative D is also superior to the other plans because it maintains the current plowing policies, allowing backcountry skiers to access peaks in the southern part of the range.”

“Would love to see LSR Preserve open in winter.”

Retaining Current Winter Use. Many commenters expressed general support for the existing winter use management strategies in the corridor (alternative A). Other commenters did not explicitly express opposition to management strategies that expand or reduce winter use in alternatives B, C, or D.

“Keep winter access as it is now with closed gates and no grooming.”

“For winter use, maintain the current traditional non-motorized access.”

“Road opening in the Spring and closing in the Fall should remain similar to current policy.”

“Regardless of which alternative is ultimately decided upon please ensure that the road closed seasonally as it is now. The opportunity to walk/ski/bike there during the off season is the only time one can truly experience the tranquility of the corridor. It should be available for walking, skiing/snowshoeing but remain ungroomed as it is now.”

“Winter closure as at present (Granite to Death Canyon trailheads) is recommended, too.”

“I also think that the winter trailhead on the north end should be at the Death Canyon Trailhead junction.”

“I think that it is very important to maintain good access or at least equivalent access to this corridor in the winter. Access to Granite Canyon TH and Death Canyon TH is very important to maintain for safety concerns to back country skiers.”

Reducing Winter Use Levels. Some commenters explicitly noted that a reduction or better containment of winter access and use along the Moose-Wilson corridor should be a priority. Emphasis in such comments generally focused on increasing the length of unplowed roads (by moving winter trailhead area north toward Moose) and not enhancing winter uses or opportunities. Commenters listed a variety of reasons for such concerns, including effects on wildlife, impacts to the wild experience that is currently offered, conflicts with the park’s goals and fundamental resources, and needs for a long unplowed snowshoe/ski route in the corridor. Although several of these comments could be considered generally supportive of maintaining existing winter access in alternative A, the focus of these comments is generally directed at supporting winter use management strategies in alternatives B and C (actively reducing vehicle access by moving winter trailheads closer to Moose) or opposing winter use enhancements proposed in alternative D. While these commenters generally agreed that winter trailhead access at the north end should be pulled back closer to the northern corridor entrance, their preference for the north trailhead location varied between Murie Ranch access road (alternative B) and Sawmill Ponds (alternative C).

“Alternative D - Having to create an improved parking area north of Death Canyon Road Junction seems excessive to facilitate the unplowed section of Moose-Wilson Road. It seems counterproductive in meeting the park’s goals for this corridor.”

“Alternative C - We like the road being un-groomed and natural and plowed road ending at Sawmill Ponds rather than Murie Ranch road access.”

“Enhanced winter recreational opportunities are not appropriate. The corridor is critical moose habitat. Its use should be further restricted rather than expanded. The Snake River bottomlands through the corridor should be closed, and grooming and/or guiding should not be employed to draw more people. Those seeking a groomed experience in the park have the inner park road. A wilder experience should remain in the corridor.”

“Winter maintenance and trail grooming will end between Sawmill Ponds Overlook and Granite Canyon trailhead. Being a backcountry skier, I feel that the same area can be accessed without the plowing and maintenance of this section. A new route to the Valley trail from the Sawmill Ponds area may need to be established.”

“Alternative D’s ideas of adding new constructed paved pathways and adding operational practices to increase use (grooming, adding guided tours) is not sound and would not achieve the purpose of the plan. New construction would adversely impact the ‘seven fundamental resources and values’ previously identified within the corridor.”

“I do not support adding new winter recreation in this sensitive corridor, including grooming the road for cross country skiing, skating, potentially snow bikes, and adding commercially guided tours.”

“Carry forward the strategies listed under Alternative C because the existing length of unplowed road is too short for even a moderate day of snowshoeing or skiing and much of the area that is currently plowed on the northern end affords many opportunities for self discover that are absent from other portions of the road.”

“We also support the proposal in Alternative B that winter maintenance of Moose-Wilson Road would end at the Murie Ranch access road junction, and winter use would be limited to skiing, snowshoeing, and walking, without grooming.”

“Oppose any plans to increase winter recreation on in the Moose-Wilson corridor via grooming the snow covered road or increasing the number of allowed activities. Promoting any increase of use during the winter months would have an unacceptable impact on wintering wildlife.”

“the northern winter parking area should be located at Sawmill Ponds parking lot and/or at the new entrance station location, rather than at locations near the Murie Center as described on the preliminary alternatives document.”

VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE / EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

The National Park Service received comments on the alternative management strategies related to visitor amenities and signage and education and interpretation. The following provides a summary of public comments related to these aspects of visitor use of the corridor.

Visitor Amenities and Signage. Some commenters supported improvements or increases to visitor amenities in the Moose-Wilson corridor, including parking and turnouts, signage, wildlife viewing areas, restrooms at some or all of the major trailheads, or additional bear-resistant garbage containers at key parking areas and turnouts. Other commenters opposed increases of these visitor amenities and desired that the corridor remain as rustic as possible. These commenters believed that increased amenities would increase traffic in the corridor, contributing to detrimental impacts to the corridor’s fundamental resources and values.

“These [proposed new parking] areas should include designated parking for safari/shuttles. Connected to these parking areas a raised wooden walkway should lead to an observation deck overlooking the wetlands and beaver lodge area allowing for spectacular viewing experiences. As has been observed wildlife can live and thrive near humans best when a separation is obvious.”

“Improve parking, turnouts, and restrooms. This would enhance the visitors’ experience.”

“All parking areas within the corridor with more than 20 spaces will have restrooms. The addition of restrooms in other areas of GTNP has been a very appreciated and necessary improvement! With the increase of use Moose-Wilson needs these!”

“Perhaps some additional interpretive trails/signage could be developed in less sensitive areas- -these simple signs, identifying particular habitat, wildlife, flowers, etc are important bridges to visitors learning about the “why’s” of the National Park and building support for it in the future.”

“Include education via signage at trailhead kiosks that restrict all human-caused noise/voice levels, including any emulating from electronic devices, which interfere with the natural soundscapes. My worst park experiences have been related to visitor noise impacts.”

“No added restroom needed at entrance to Death Canyon Rd. Don’t need add’l environmental impact”

“Focus on previsit info not “turn left at the log, right at the rock” signage = visual degradation & loss of sense of discovery.”

Education and Interpretation. Some commenters supported an increase in educational and interpretive opportunities in the Moose-Wilson corridor and offered a variety of suggestions for these activities. These suggestions included staffing naturalists and wildlife brigade workers, adding interpretive stations or additional rangers at both ends of the corridor near the park entrance stations to provide information and short programs to visitors while waiting in lines, an outdoor teaching school for children, or increased interpretive waysides. Other commenters supported a minimization of interpretive activities and waysides in the corridor, as these opportunities are available at other nearby locations such as the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center, Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve Center, and the Murie Center, or that they may detract from the scenic value of the corridor.

“At the two entrances to the corridor (where visitors may have to wait), small interpretive stations should be built to provide information, offer suggestions of alternatives, and provide short programs for waiting visitors.”

“Education! People need to be taught that their mere presence in these open areas can and do cause harm to the very thing they want to enjoy!”

“There seem to be 2-3 rangers at the south entrance however there is only one at the windows. At least one should be outside, assisting with the line by answering questions and describing the rural nature of the roadway.”

“Minimize media & interactive material. Produce this type of information for the visitor centers. For example, the Laurence S. Rockefeller Visitor Center would contain information related to the corridor. OR, create an APP of interpretive information.”

“Good information can be provided at each end of the road, then folks can travel along and “see what they see”, without all of them stopping at pre-determined points.”

“Expanding interpretive displays (as in Alt. D): unacceptable and unneeded clutter and distraction from actual scenic values”

“The park should more explicitly consider strategies that encourage people to leave their cars and visit the corridor using human-power. The preliminary information from the Utah State Study shows that a majority of visitors to key destinations in the corridor did not ever leave their car. Providing incentives for people to leave their car and walk, hike, or bike in the corridor makes for a more intimate experience with wildlife and habitat, and fosters greater support of the park in the long-term”

HORSE USE

The preliminary alternatives did not specifically identify strategies related to private horse use. As mentioned previously, it was determined that the topic of horse use warrants inclusion in this report. Many commenters submitted their concerns and ideas surrounding private horse use. These comments are summarized in two categories below: (1) horse use and improved horse trailer parking and (2) trailheads.

Horse Use. Within the topic of horse use, many commenters expressed support for continuation of this use; however, some others expressed opposition for such use. Those who support horse use often raised concerns with the National Park Service changing or removing horseback riding opportunities and experiences along the Moose-Wilson corridor, particularly in areas where horseback riding is a historic use that connects with surrounding ranch settings or surrounding natural/wild settings. Commenters were concerned with possible changes to physical access, rules, and trails for horse use as well as changes to ranch settings and structures that historically complemented the horseback riding experience in the corridor. Elimination and reduction of horse use restrictions in the Sawmill Ponds area was specifically opposed in several comments. In most cases, the above concerns applied to both commercial and private/individual horseback riding opportunities. Commenters opposed to horse use raised concerns with impacts and effects of past and continued horse use in the corridor. Impacts to trail conditions was the primary impact concern raised by those opposed.

“Continuing horseback riding in this corridor area is very important. It is one of the most unique areas of the park that allows this activity without causing any conflicts with other parks goals. It has also been an activity that has been historically used in this area for over 90 years with minimal conflicts and requiring minimal park management.”

“The park is just beginning to restore the old White Grass ranch and part of that ranch experience was trail riding. Why take away an historic part of the history of the park at a place where it was actually practiced?”

“Horse trails and horseback riding access provide the Park visitor with an intimate connection with the Park. It is a “natural connection” with the local wildlife, the beautiful environment, and connects us with the historical and cultural past that created the area.”

“The prohibition or reduction of horseback riding (whether private or commercial) through parts of Teton National Park will negatively impact the enjoyment of many; this is the primary purpose of our visits to this area.”

“Horseback riding does not impact the environment and habitat of wildlife, and is a spectacular way to view wildlife.”

“[The Sawmill Ponds] area has great trails where there are few hikers, a great ‘wilderness’ experience. Please leave it to enjoy with our equine companions.”

“Do not close commercial horseback riding on the Sawmill Pond Trails. . . It has also been an activity that has been historically used in this area for over 90 years with minimal conflicts and requiring minimal park management. This area offers access to unique and safe horseback riding trails unavailable in other parts of the park. These trails are used to access the historical White Grass Ranch area, along with Sky Ranch and Trail Ranch.”

“I am also upset by the idea of the elimination of historic horseback trails.....My family and I have enjoyed these trails for years, originally as dude ranch guests and now as summer residents. Keeping these trails is right in line with the park’s goal to “Protect and maintain cultural resources as important links to the human history of the Moose- Wilson corridor, including historical and archeological sites, cultural landscapes, and ethnographic resources.”

“I have driven the road, hiked and rode horseback in the area and I find horseback provides one of the best methods of viewing and interacting with nature. Driving, hiking and bicycling do not come even close to what I can see and learn from the back of a horse. So I am a bit puzzled as to why horseback riding would be phased out in the Sawmill pond area. Horseback riding should be expanded, not reduced. Access to the old ranches (Whitegrass) should be encouraged as it helps tell the history of the area.”

“I have been highly concerned for over 30 years with the damage done by horse packing on foot trails. Horse mule packing use on mountain trails is inappropriate. I strongly feel that horse use is tantamount to ORV use, and should be severely limited.”

“Restrictions on traffic, like the bicycle days in plan C, and phasing out the horseback riding might be an improvement to existing management.”

“A bicycle has less impact than a horse on trail sustainability... Why should they be able to go out there, hammer the trails and crap on everything and a biker can’t go ride trails in peace on public land with minimal impact. Just because that what has always been done I guess. And that’s not a good reason.”

Improved Horse Trailer Parking and Trailheads. Commenters raised concerns with inadequate horse trailer parking availability at trailheads in the corridor. Concerns about deteriorated conditions and parking conflicts at the Poker Flats Trailhead were also raised. Suggestions for trailer parking included: supporting expansion of Poker Flats trailer parking, adding horse trailer parking at other trailheads (e.g., Death Canyon, Taggart Lake, Windy Point turnout, and the White Grass turnout), and improving the conditions, signage, and organization of the Poker Flats parking area. One request was also made to modify trail alignments to avoid trespassing on private residences and inholdings.

“Finally, as more equestrian users wish to enjoy the trails, there need to be adequate places to park horse trailers at the access points to the corridor. Poker Flats is a great spot, just too small. Both Taggart Lake and Death Canyon need improved trailer parking for equestrian use.”

“Creating a horse parking area near the windy point turnout, similar to Poker Flats, would separate horses from car pull outs while still allowing use of the existing trails by horses.”

“[Re: Poker Flats parking] Our key desires would be 1) to re-gravel it every couple of years to keep the large middle area mud hole from returning, 2) to add some signage to instruct trailers on the parking sequence and to preclude tourist autos, and 3) to use the saved funds to maintain the three trail bridges over the diversion ditch. Our worry about the planned improvement is that it will attract tourist and cyclist auto parking, regardless of signage. And cars can really foul up the parking accessibility.”

“We do park trailers in the large Sawmill Ponds parking area, and then ride west into White Grass or north into Skyline and beyond. Upgrades to this parking area should allow for continued occasional horse trailer parking.”

“White Grass Turn-off Junction PA - This is our primary north-side parking area. We access White Grass to the west, the old JY and Wister Draw to the south, and lower Poker Flats to the east. Any parking area improvement should allow for 2-3 horse trailers on occasion.”

“Our wishlist would also include a new trail segment on the east side of the M-W Rd paralleling the Barker driveway that would connect into the telephone line trail which goes south into the old RLazyS. That would keep us from trespassing on the in-holdings driveway.”

OTHER COMMENTS RECEIVED

Beyond commenting on specific management strategies, commenters frequently expressed their belief that the Moose-Wilson corridor is a unique and special part of Grand Teton National Park that warrants protection. For many, the wildlife and plants that inhabit this area are critical both in terms of ecology and visitor experience, and some commenters urged avoiding further development. Commenters urged the National Park Service to manage this special place in accordance with the purpose of Grand Teton National Park and the mandates of the Organic Act, and other applicable laws and policies. The need to protect fundamental resources and values was also expressed. Many commenters suggested that these management strategies could be implemented through partnership with other agencies and organizations.

A few commenters requested an extension on the public review of the range of preliminary alternatives due to the broad national interest in the plan or expanded efforts to better inform the public regarding the availability of the range of preliminary alternatives for review. While not required by the National Environmental Policy Act, Grand Teton National Park felt that public feedback on the preliminary alternatives would be vital for the next steps in developing the Draft EIS. The National Park Service made extensive efforts to inform the public through all available media regarding the availability of the range of preliminary alternatives for review.

Some commenters asked the National Park Service for explicit details on how the alternatives and their management strategies will be analyzed in terms of impacts. Other commenters requested specific details of how some of the strategies would be implemented or how potential impacts from those strategies would be mitigated. For instance, the definition of “peak use times” was requested by multiple commenters.

