

## **National Park Service Fact Sheet on the Proposed Transfer of U.S. Highway 12**

U.S. Highway 12 passes through the heart of a national park: it is the main east-west route through Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Transferring the portion of the road that passes through the park from the state to the National Park Service would be an important step in furthering the creation of this park. It would be positive for residents, visitors, commuters, and local businesses.

- In 1986, Congress identified this road as a potential park road and directed the National Park Service to “conduct a feasibility study of establishing United States Highway 12 as the 'Indiana Dunes Parkway' (Public Law 99-583). This report included numerous public hearings and incorporated public comment before making the recommendation that having a section of Highway 12 designated as a park road was feasible and met with the mission of creating this national park.
- This was just one of many reports and public meetings on this concept. The 1980 General Management Plan for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the 1983 Transportation Study for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and the 1997 General Management Plan Amendments for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore all included the proposal of transferring a portion of U.S. Highway 12 to the National Park Service for management as a scenic drive. All underwent public participation and comment.
- The Porter County U.S. 12/20 Transportation Corridor Plan prepared for the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission concludes: “Interest and evaluation of INDOT relinquishing ownership of U.S. 12 throughout Porter County to local jurisdictions and/or NPS would allow for local control and decision-making allowing promotion of local changes (speed limits, truck re-routing) and enhancement projects.”
- The National Park Service is interested in management of the road only where it passes through the national park. This would be from the east gate of ArcelorMittal to County Road N. 375 East in Beverly Shores, approximately six miles.
- The National Park Service would not initiate a toll, a fee, or otherwise charge for use of the road. The road would not be closed to commuters, residents, or visitors. The only change in traffic would be to through commercial vehicles. These would be routed to U.S. Highway 20 or other roads.
- Deliveries and commercial vehicles servicing communities that can be accessed only from U.S. Highway 12 would not be affected. Local deliveries to the communities of Beverly Shores, Dune Acres, and Porter Beach would not be restricted, nor would deliveries to National Park Service or NICTD properties.
- If conveyed to the National Park Service, we would work with INDOT for transition to NPS responsibility for road maintenance, snow removal, and signage. The road would be maintained to the same standards for maintaining any U.S. Highway and would remain designated as U.S. Highway 12.
- This is nothing unusual; there are numerous places where the National Park Service has assumed ownership and management of U.S. Highways where they pass through national parks. A few examples are U.S. Highway 209 through Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in Pennsylvania, U.S. Highway 34 through Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, and U.S. Highway 441 through Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In fact, the same U.S. Highway 20 that passes through Northwest Indiana is a national park road where it goes through Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Under National Park Service ownership, U.S. Highway 12 would remain open and available for use.

- As with all roads in national parks, this section of U.S. Highway 12 would fall under the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Lands Highway program. Through this program the National Park Service has access to funding for major repairs to roads. In 2011-2012 this program funded \$800,000 in repairs to the County Line Road Bridge north of U.S. Highway 12 and \$1.4 million in repairs and redevelopment of East State Park Road in the Beverly Shores area of the national lakeshore. Funds available through this program are only available to federal land management agencies.
- Transfer would relieve the state of the cost of maintaining this road, but there would be no changes to law enforcement authorities. State and local police and national park rangers would continue to have jurisdiction on this road. Fire protection and EMS would remain as it is now.
- Upon transfer of the road, the National Park Service would conduct a series of public meetings to determine management of the road. Such issues as appropriate speed limits, improvement of signs, installation of traffic lights, the safety of intersections, beach traffic control, and landscaping would be addressed. We would also seek public input for such things as construction of scenic pullouts, wayside exhibits, and below ground burial of the power lines. The goals would be to make this road a scenic asset to residents and visitors alike that would enhance the region's image and improve safety.

In sum, it has long been a goal of the National Park Service, the intention of Congress, and the desire of regional planning efforts that U.S. Highway 12 through Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore become a scenic route. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in studies, numerous public meetings, and hundreds of comments from local communities have supported this proposal. Letters supporting this proposal have been submitted from past managers at INDOT and in the Governor's office.

If the State of Indiana chooses to transfer a portion of U.S. Highway 12 to the National Park Service to manage as part of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore we are confident that the public will be pleased with the results. If the state decides not to transfer the road, the National Park Service will continue to work with INDOT and local communities to improve the driving experience through the park.