



# Transit Partnerships

## FEDERAL LANDS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FACT SHEET

---

Few national parks can independently conceive, plan, implement, and operate a fully effective transit system, serving visitors both in the park and before they reach it.

---



In Washington D.C., some revenue from NPS parking meters is shared with the DC Circulator, which provides transit access to The National Mall. (Photo Credit: NPS)

Transit systems to and within national parks address challenges to visitor experience and natural resources. These systems are often developed with partners as a way to address shared transportation and visitor experience challenges.

Nearly 100 transit systems operate in 65 national parks, using shuttle buses, trams, and ferries. Transit services, along with non-motorized transportation options such as bicycles and kayaks, provide alternatives to privately owned vehicles. Benefits include: mitigating air and noise pollution, traffic congestion, and resource impacts, and improving visitor experiences. Transit supports better quality of life for surrounding communities by providing improved access, managing congestion, and enhancing economic opportunities.

### Effective Partnerships

Partnering creates relationships where information, interests, and resources are shared to create mutually beneficial solutions. Launching or modifying transit services requires complex problem solving to manage funding, operations, maintenance, vehicle type, routes, and stops. Collaboration is essential for generating support for transit projects and removing potential barriers for successful results. Identifying partners should be one of the first steps in any transit project. Stakeholders may include private partners; nongovernmental organizations; federal recreation and land conservation programs; and local, state, and federal public agencies. Effective partnerships will work to solve differences and lead to projects that benefit all involved.

As of 2018, 81 percent of National Park Service (NPS) transit systems are operated by a non-NPS entity under an agreement or contract. These systems account for nearly 98.5 percent of passenger boardings service wide. Few national parks can independently conceive, plan, implement and operate a transit system. Partnerships make NPS transit systems possible and provide important connections between parks and their adjacent communities to serve visitors before they even reach the park with information and multimodal transportation options.

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



Island Explorer bus stop at Acadia National Park (Photo Credit: NPS)



Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) bus stop (Photo Credit: NPS)

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

## Acadia National Park

Strong cooperation led to the successful planning and development of Acadia's Island Explorer bus system in 1999. The Bicycle Express was added in 2005. The original partnership between the park, the Mount Desert Island League of Towns, the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, Friends of Acadia, private partners and a nonprofit transit provider has continued. The partnership led to the development of the Acadia Gateway Center, an outside park station that houses a bus maintenance facility, fueling station, and the transit provider's administrative offices, with visitor parking and an enclosed parking shelter. A proposed regional transportation hub and visitor welcome center is planned in the next phase. Replacement of the bus fleet is underway; partner financial resources are being combined to allow the purchase of new propane buses through a multiyear (2016–2019) agreement managed by MDOT.

The *Acadia National Park Final Transportation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (March 2019) is also the culmination of a collaborative process that examined current and potential visitor transportation and access opportunities. It developed long-term strategies for providing access, connecting visitors to important experiences and places, and managing visitor use.

## National Mall and Memorial Parks

After years of collaborative planning, the National Mall and Memorial Parks reached an agreement in 2015 with Washington D.C. Department of Transportation to operate the National Mall Route for the D.C. Circulator.

This partnership with a local transit agency provides affordable public transit for visitor access to the monuments and museums on the National Mall. This service is fully integrated into the local and regional transit network. With 14 new electric buses added to the DC Circulator fleet in 2018, another benefit includes reduced emissions.

Multimodal connectivity is provided by buses with bicycle racks. The buses connect the Capital Bikeshare's 400+ stations to the regional system. Nine bikeshare stations are located on the National Mall, with the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorial stations among the highest used in the region. Through this partnership, park staff can focus on managing the park while ensuring visitors are provided exemplary multimodal transit service.

## Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park has partnered with the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) since 2002. YARTS links the park shuttle system with regional transit and allows visitors to access and travel around the park without a personal vehicle. The park's transit system (Yosemite Valley Shuttle), provides access to eastern Yosemite Valley and connections between the campground, lodges, and trailheads. Yosemite National Park owns their transit buses; the system is operated by a concessioner. The Yosemite Valley Shuttle connects to YARTS, which is operated by local county governments and provides transit service to Yosemite from surrounding communities (railway stations, airports, hotels, and other destinations). Yosemite's transit system and its partnership with YARTS reduces the need for driving a personal vehicle, expands transportation options, improves the visitor experience, and leads to reduced congestion in and around the park.