



NPS Transportation System Characteristics

Access to and within the National Park System has been a defining experience for generations of visitors.

The National Park Service (NPS) coordinates the planning and implementation of transportation systems that improve the visitor experience and care for national parks by:

- Preserving natural and cultural resources.
- Enhancing visitor safety and security.
- Protecting plant and animal species.
- Reducing congestion.
- Decreasing pollution.

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.

For more information, visit nps.gov/transportation

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May 2017
EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

Nationwide, 417 National Park Units cover more than 84 million acres. Access to and travel within these special places is made possible by the NPS transportation system.



The Denali National Park (DENA) transit system offers visitor access to much of the Park. (NPS Photo)

The NPS transportation system provides essential public access to parks, provides visitor mobility within parks, and allows the staff to conduct park operations. This transportation system includes:

- 5,690 miles of paved roads (of which 1,100 miles are parkways)
- 7,000 miles of unpaved roads
- 1,451 bridges
- 63 tunnels
- 127 transit systems operated in 64 of the 417 NPS units
- 17,872 miles of trails, of which 5,012 miles (28%) are paved

Roads, Parkways, and Bridges

Park roads, parkways, and bridges are the NPS transportation system's backbone and enable visitors to tour by automobile, bus, bike, or trolley. Park roads frequently link to other modes of transportation—water ferries, trains, and trails—both in and outside the parks. When integrated with the transportation networks of gateway communities, the parks' transportation services provide visitors with seamless access, and frequently improve the mobility and quality of life of local residents. Annually, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the national parks is estimated to be in excess of 2.4 billion.

Alternative Transportation Systems

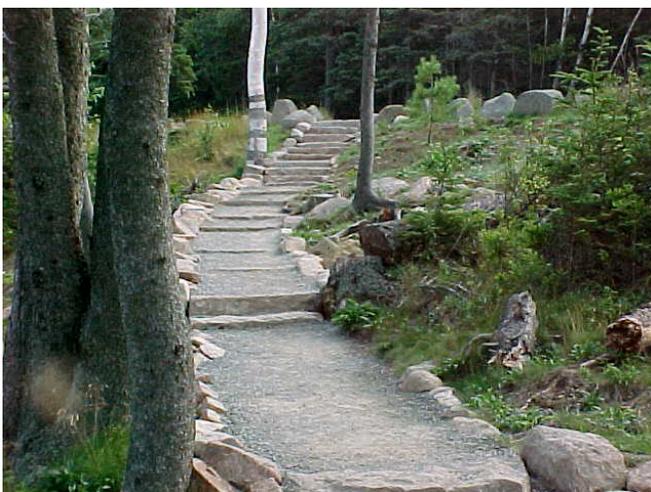
Alternative transportation systems (ATS) encompass all modes of travel other than the private motor vehicle. Within a park, this can include land- and water-based transportation through utilizing trolleys, buses, water-borne vessels, aerial trams, bicycle sharing systems, and intelligent transportation systems. ATS can help enhance visitor access and accessibility, relieve traffic congestion and parking shortages for areas at or nearing capacity. ATS can also contribute to preserving resources by providing for improvements to air quality, soundscapes, reduced wildlife / auto collisions, and by demonstrating leadership in using alternative transportation to reduce fossil fuel consumption and contributions to greenhouse gas emissions.

Transit systems are the motorized form of ATS, identified above, that can provide access for multiple visitors at once. In addition to reducing congestion, transit services enable visitors to enjoy the surrounding features without needing to focus on driving, and may include interpretive services to enhance the visitor experience and provide education along the route.



As of 2015, the NPS has 127 transit systems in 64 park units nationwide. The systems are provided through contractual, concession, and/or partnership agreements. Twenty are owned and operated by the NPS, 92 are contracted by the NPS through concession and/or service contracts, and 15 are provided under cooperative agreements with public or private partners.

- 60% of the NPS-owned fleet of vehicles are classified as alternative fueled vehicles including propane, compressed natural gas, and diesel/electric hybrid vehicles
- 84% of NPS transit systems are operated by a non-NPS entity under an agreement or contract
- 51% of the transit systems involve shuttles, buses, vans, and trams; 32% of the systems use boats and ferries. Planes represent 12% of the systems, followed by snowcoaches (3%) and trains/trolleys (3%).
- 49 systems are part of guided interpretive tours; 33 systems provide critical access to an NPS unit or site not readily accessible to the public due to geographic constraints.



Trails

Of the nearly 18,000 miles of trails throughout all units of the National Park System, most are natural surfaced trails in backcountry settings. However, front country trails are also an important element of the transportation system, often connecting built facilities to popular overlooks, other tourist destinations, and local communities. In addition, front country trails can provide an alternative to private motor vehicle access to many park units. Approximately 5,000 miles of NPS front-country trails are paved, helping to disperse users and allowing visitors who bicycle or walk to have a more first-hand park experience.