Current State of Transportation Priorities and Needs

National Park Service Transportation Program Goal

To preserve and protect resources, while providing safe and enjoyable access to and within the national parks, using sustainable, appropriate, and integrated transportation solutions.

www.nps.gov/transportation

Photo Credit: NPS

Photo Credit: NPS

The National Park Service transportation system provides **over 300 million visitors** per year with access to America's most treasured landscapes and historic sites. This transportation system also contributes to **economic benefits and connects national parks with nearby communities**.

The Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) is one of the primary funding sources for NPS transportation infrastructure. Other funding sources, including the Great American Outdoors Act, provide significant, necessary funding for major transportation projects.

To maintain a **high quality, multimodal transportation system** and address key transportation priorities, NPS allocates funding across three theme areas.

These areas include:

Protect the Climate & Advance Resource Protection

Enhance Visitor Experience & Connect Diverse Communities

Reinvest in the System & Make Legacy Investments

2021

NPS Transportation Today

Today, the **NPS transportation system faces major challenges**, including overcrowding in some parks and visitation challenges in others. The NPS needs to keep pace with rapidly changing technologies and maintain aging infrastructure. The NPS also faces **damage from climate change and severe weather**, and needs to make its infrastructure more resilient while also reducing carbon emissions.

The NPS is actively working to address these challenges through investments in its transportation system, including the roads, bridges, transit systems, front country trails, and ferries that provide critical access to and within parks. The NPS and its U.S. Department of Transportation partners maintain this infrastructure using transportation industry standards and **performance-based, data-driven decisions.**

The NPS transportation system consists of:

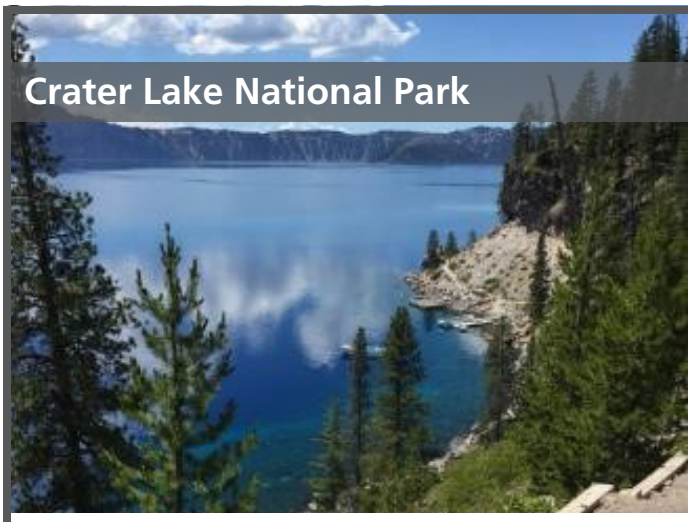
100 transit systems

4,600 miles of front country trails

5,500 miles of paved roads

6,100 paved parking areas

1,400 bridges



Crater Lake National Park

Providing active transportation opportunities and keeping pedestrians and bicyclists safe are NPS priorities. **The Cleetwood Trail at Crater Lake National Park requires investment to address critical safety issues and maintenance needs**, including mitigating nine unstable slopes, reconstructing the trail retaining walls, grades, and cross slopes to make the trail level and stable, and rehabilitating the failing bulkhead and floating docks at the marina.

Photo Credit: NPS

Assateague Island National Seashore

Climate change has increased the frequency of extreme weather events and natural disasters, severely impacting transportation systems and facilities on public lands, such as this parking lot at Assateague Island National Seashore. The NPS has conducted over 20 vulnerability assessments and found that **access roads and other transportation infrastructure are highly vulnerable to coastal hazards and sea-level rise**.

Photo Credit: NPS

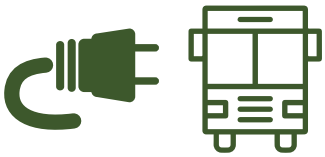
Protect the Climate & Advance Resource Protection

The NPS is meeting its **mission to protect and preserve natural and cultural resources** by reducing transportation carbon emissions and preparing its assets for extreme weather events and climate change.

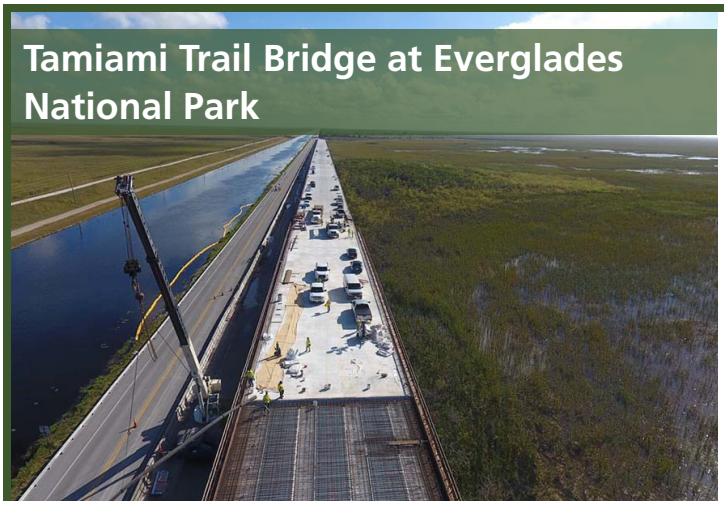
The NPS **invests in low and no carbon transportation options** like transit, electric vehicles, and trails for walking and biking. Strategies like wildlife crossings, managing traffic congestion, and use of quieter pavement materials help to minimize the impact of the transportation system on natural, cultural, and historic resources.

Priorities include:

Electrifying transit buses and expanding the electric vehicle charging network.



Implementing projects to reduce damage from climate change.



Tamiami Trail Bridge at Everglades National Park

The NPS is raising the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) to restore seasonal water flow to Everglades National Park. The project will **improve ecological connectivity and replenish aquifers** across south Florida, making the state's freshwater supply more resilient to climate change.

Many NPS **transportation assets are vulnerable to natural disasters.** The NPS is investing in **strategies to adapt to climate change**, including raising roads and bridges in coastal areas and using permeable pavement to reduce flooding.

Photo Credit: NPS

Zion National Park

The NPS is replacing Zion National Park's aging transit fleet with one of the largest **battery electric bus** purchases in North America. The fleet electrification will help the park reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, reduce noise, and save on operating costs.

Additionally, the **NPS has over 150 electric vehicle charging stations**. The NPS is working through partnerships to build out a network of electric vehicle chargers.

Photo Credit: NPS

Enhance Visitor Experience & Connect Diverse Communities

To improve access for visitors and connect parks and communities, the NPS is creating a 21st century transportation system through **investments in transit, trails, and technology**. These multimodal transportation investments ensure a national park system that is responsive to increased visitor demand and enables car-free trips.

Each year, the approximately 100 NPS surface and water-borne transit systems carry over **43 million park visitors**, eliminate over 480 million passenger vehicle miles from the road, and **reduce CO_2 emissions by nearly 180,000 metric tons**.

The NPS is also researching and piloting the use of **new transportation technologies**, including:

- Real-time information on road closures, bus arrivals, and congestion;
- Partnerships for ridehailing and bike share; and
- Automated shuttle demonstrations.

Wright Brothers National Memorial

The NPS launched its **first automated shuttle** demonstrations at Wright Brothers National Memorial and Yellowstone National Park in spring 2021.

Photo Credit: North Carolina Department of Transportation

Priorities include:

Operating transit and maintaining and investing in buses, ferries, and transit facilities.

Improving existing frontcountry trails to good condition, investing in major trail projects, and constructing links in the trail network.

Researching and implementing transportation technologies and pilots to communicate to visitors, improve access, and manage congestion.

Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area

The NPS aims to **connect residents, visitors, and communities** to the Schuylkill River Trail and foster stewardship of the watershed and its heritage.

NPS multimodal investments include trails for walking and biking, transit systems to enable car-free trips, and partnerships and projects with nearby communities.

Photo Credit: NPS

Reinvest in the System & Make Legacy Investments

The NPS needs to make critical investments to maintain and improve the condition of roads and parkways, parking areas, bridges, and tunnels. **Appropriated funding enables the NPS to provide a safe and efficient transportation system** for visitors while preserving access to natural, historical, and cultural resources.

To leverage appropriated funding, the **NPS pursues grants and strategic partnerships** with state and local governments. Discretionary programs like the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program are critical to **funding priority megaprojects** across the country.

Priorities include:

Addressing life-cycle maintenance and reinvestment for existing paved roads and paved parking areas.

Addressing life-cycle maintenance and reinvestment for existing bridges and tunnels.

Foothills Parkway

The NPS is working to complete the Congressionally-authorized Foothills Parkway in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In partnership with the state of Tennessee, this project **enhances access** to the park while **promoting tourism and economic development** in gateway communities across the state's rural Foothills region.

NPS megaprojects, with a cost of over $25M each, typically **require** additional funding sources, such as NSFLTP, and strategic partnerships to successfully complete.

Photo Credit: NPS

Yellowstone National Park

At Yellowstone National Park, the Frying Pan Thermal Springs impeded visibility, creating unsafe conditions. The Grand Loop Road was realigned around Frying Pan. **This realignment re-established wetlands and provided for spectacular viewsheds**.

There are approximately 50 fatalities and 1,300 injuries annually on NPS roadways. The **NPS is working to reduce crashes and improve safety** through engineering and behavioral programs.

Photo Credit: NPS