



# National Park Service 2025 National Transportation Strategy DRAFT



National Park Service  
National Transportation Strategy

2025


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# Table of Contents

1	<i>Chapter 1</i> Introduction <i>The NPS Transportation System</i> <i>Challenges and Opportunities</i>
15	<i>Chapter 2</i> Transportation Investment Strategy <i>Transportation Funding Trends</i> <i>Transportation Investment Needs</i> <i>NPS Transportation Investment Strategy</i>
35	<i>Chapter 3</i> GOAL: Advance Resource Protection
45	<i>Chapter 4</i> GOAL: Enhance Visitor Experience and Connect Gateway Communities
61	<i>Chapter 5</i> GOAL: Reinvest in the System and Make Legacy Investments
71	<i>Chapter 6</i> Summary of Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures
74	Conclusion
A-1	Appendix A: Transportation Legacy Investment Project Needs

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Yosemite National Park

**NPS Mission:** The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.



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# Introduction

The Organic Act of 1916 established the National Park Service (NPS) and a National Park System with the goal of “conserving the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein” for generations of Americans to appreciate and enjoy. The mission of the National Park Service is to conserve and provide access to natural and cultural resources and values. The importance of this mission was underscored by the Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum, in his confirmation hearing testimony: “The National Park is... a priority and we need to take care of these sites, whether historic or others... we have to make sure that they’re capable of handling and supporting the visitors that want to see them. We know they’re great for the local economy.”

Perhaps in no other area is this dual mission more evident than in transportation. For more than 100 years, the National Park Service has provided the people of the United States, and the world, with opportunities to visit and experience some of the most unique and special places the country has to offer. First with railroads and stagecoaches, then with personal automobiles, and now with highways, buses, ferries, and emerging mobility technologies, the National Park Service has built and maintained the infrastructure and services needed to provide millions of annual visitors with these opportunities.

National Parks also support economic prosperity and provide opportunities for recreation. In 2023, the National Park Service recorded more than 325 million recreation visits and visitors spent an estimated \$26.4 in local gateway regions. These expenditures supported 415,000 jobs and resulted in more than \$56 billion of economic output in the national economy.

Providing transportation services to access 425+ park units in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and in U.S. territories requires careful planning and a context-sensitive approach. With aging bridges and roads, and with changing technologies and visitor expectations, the National Park Service has much to prepare for to achieve its transportation vision:

***To provide safe access to the United States’ most unique and special places.***

**The National Transportation Strategy is organized by three goals, represented by these icons.**



Advance Resource Protection



Enhance Visitor Experience and Connect Gateway Communities



Reinvest in the System and Make Legacy Investments

# The National Transportation Strategy

The NTS is an update to the National Park Service's 2017 National Long Range Transportation Plan (NLRTP). It provides information about transportation challenges and opportunities that the National Park Service is facing and communicates agency priorities and strategies to address them.

The NTS is consistent with and builds upon related NPS policies and strategic plans, including NPS Management Policies and Director's Orders and the NPS Facility Investment Strategy (Figure 1).

## Ambitious Long-Term Goals

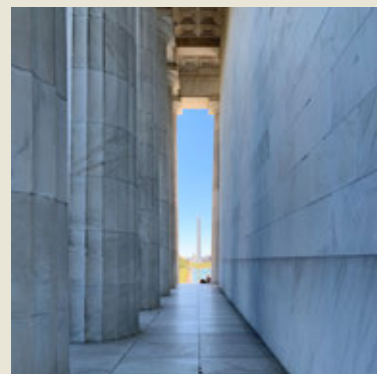
Many of the details within the NTS focus on actionable steps that the National Park Service can take within the next five years. However, the NTS is informed by long-term goals and objectives, and sets an agenda for achieving ambitious changes in transportation infrastructure and operations. Core themes include: improving safety, expanding recreation access, reinvesting in critical infrastructure, and providing a world-class transportation experience for visitors. Working closely with state, Federal, Tribal, and local partners to improve connections, secure funding, and reduce barriers to visiting parks are also key priorities.

## Informed by Stakeholders and Subject-Matter Experts

Transportation planning is inherently interdisciplinary and the NTS includes contributions from subject matter experts from across the National Park Service. Input from the public, key stakeholders, and NPS partners was used to inform the NTS.

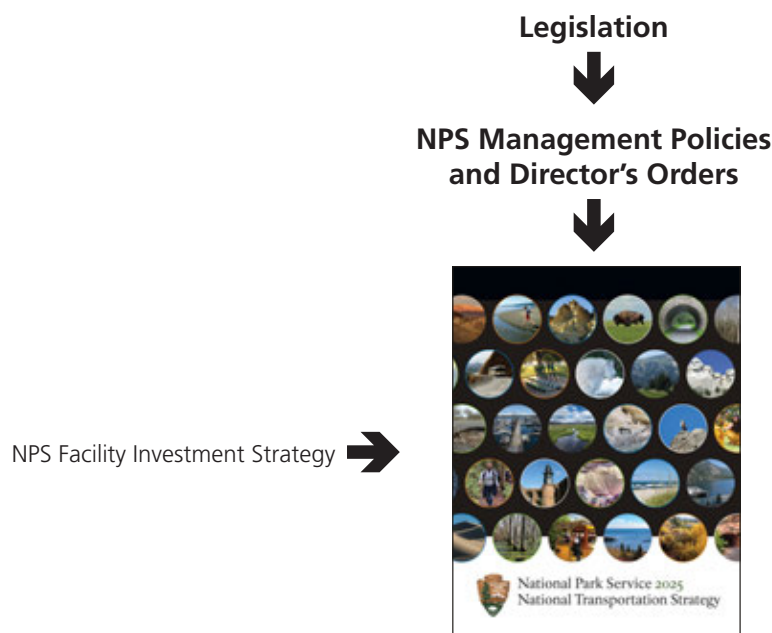
**The National Transportation Strategy (NTS) aligns with the four core pillars of the NPS Facility Investment Strategy:**

- **Invest in Our Future:** Through sustainable opportunities, improve facilities or operations while prioritizing conservation and protecting natural and cultural resources.
- **Invest in Our Visitors:** Continue to meet the needs and expectations of visitors by modernizing our critical backbone infrastructure to eliminate health and safety liability risks, leading to safe, accessible, and reliable service for visitors. Enable every visitor to have a great national park experience by improving access and enhancing recreational opportunities.
- **Invest in Our Workplace:** Invest in assets that support and enhance employee accessibility, experience, and well-being to improve effectiveness and retention.
- **Invest in Our Heritage:** Preserve and protect important natural and cultural heritage assets for future generations by properly managing and maintaining natural and cultural heritage assets that are critical to understanding our country's story.



The Washington Monument and U.S. Capitol Building as seen from the Lincoln Memorial. *Credit: Kevin McCoy*

**Figure 1:** Alignment of NTS with Other Plans



# A Performance-Based Plan

The NTS provides information about how the National Park Service tracks and monitors success in a variety of areas. Performance measures and targets are based on transportation management systems the National Park Service uses to track and model specific outcomes. Performance indicators are also included, which the National Park Service uses to monitor progress in harder to measure areas.

## Part of a “3C” Planning Process

The NTS guides transportation investments at a high level and is part of the National Park Service’s continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3C) approach to transportation planning.<sup>1</sup> Long range planning is the first step of the transportation program life cycle (Figure 2) informing multiyear investment programs, project development, as well as construction, operations, and performance monitoring. The NTS covers all modes of transportation and addresses all transportation planning factors from asset management to environmental impact, safety, and more.

As part of the National Park Service’s decades-long partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the NTS fulfills transportation planning requirements under the [Federal Lands Transportation Program](#) (FLTP), the primary funding source for NPS transportation infrastructure. Table 1 demonstrates how the NTS addresses the ten transportation planning factors identified under [23 U.S.C sec. 134/135](#).

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1 The 3C process is a guiding principle for transportation planning dating back to the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962. Long range transportation plans, like this one, are part of the 3C planning process, and are typically updated every five years (continuing). They cover all transportation modes and funding sources (comprehensive) and are informed by public and stakeholder input (cooperative).



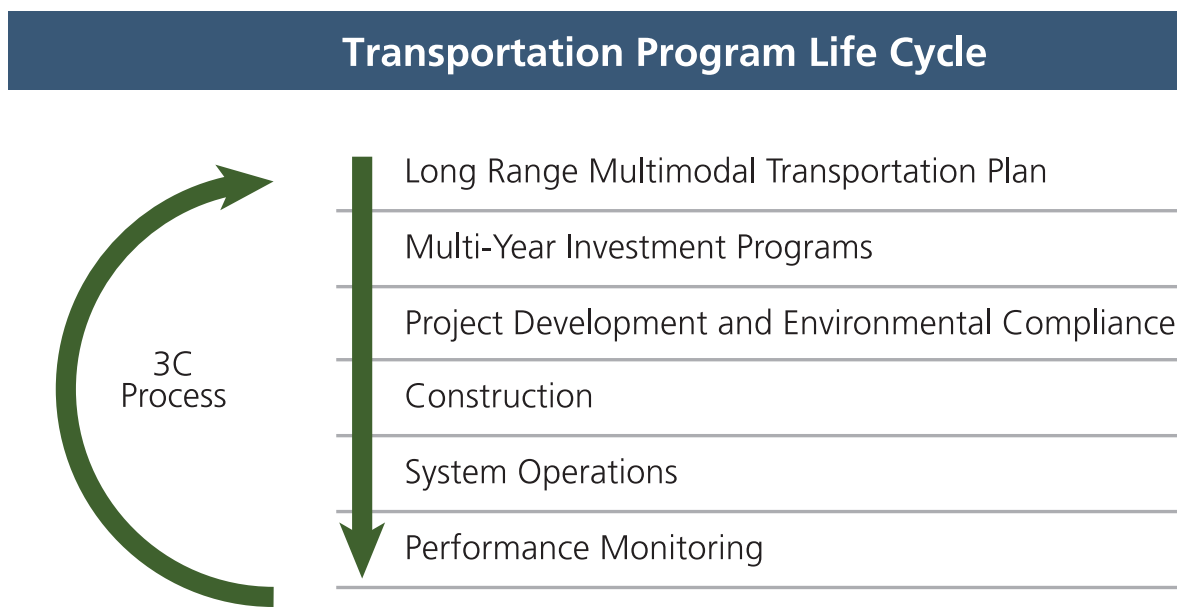
**Table 1:** U.S. DOT Planning Factors

Source: U.S. DOT Planning Factors. [23 CFR § 450.306 - Scope of the metropolitan transportation planning process](#). | [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations \(e-CFR\)](#). Accessed on September 26, 2023.

U.S. DOT Planning Factors	NPS Goal 1 Advance Resource Protection	NPS Goal 2 Enhance Visitor Experience & Connect Gateway Communities	NPS Goal 3 Reinvest in the System & Make Legacy Investments
Economic Vitality		X	X
Safety		X	X
Security		X	
Accessibility & Mobility		X	X
Environment	X		X
Connectivity		X	X
Efficiency		X	X
System Preservation	X		X
Resiliency & Reliability			X
Travel & Tourism		X	

**Figure 2:** Transportation Program Life Cycle

The NTS follows a typical 3C process for transportation planning: continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative.



# The NPS Transportation System

The NPS transportation system is an extensive network of roads, bridges, tunnels, transportation trails, and transit systems. These assets represent a combined \$60+ billion transportation portfolio that support a core mission of the National Park Service by providing visitor access to America's greatest natural and cultural treasures. The NPS transportation system is the backbone on which all visitor experiences rely, connecting national parks with nearby communities and contributing to economic benefits.

The NPS transportation system is similar in scope and scale to a small state DOT and includes a diverse inventory of transportation assets:

- Roadway systems, including approximately 6,600 miles of paved roads, 7,300 miles of unpaved roads, 1,800 road bridges and tunnels, 6,300 paved parking areas, and 1,800 unpaved parking areas.
- Nonmotorized systems, including approximately 1,000 miles of transportation trails and 200 transportation trail bridges and tunnels.
- Approximately 100 transit systems, including buses, trolleys, trains, ferries, and snow coaches, as well as the maintenance facilities, buildings, docks, and other assets that support their operation.

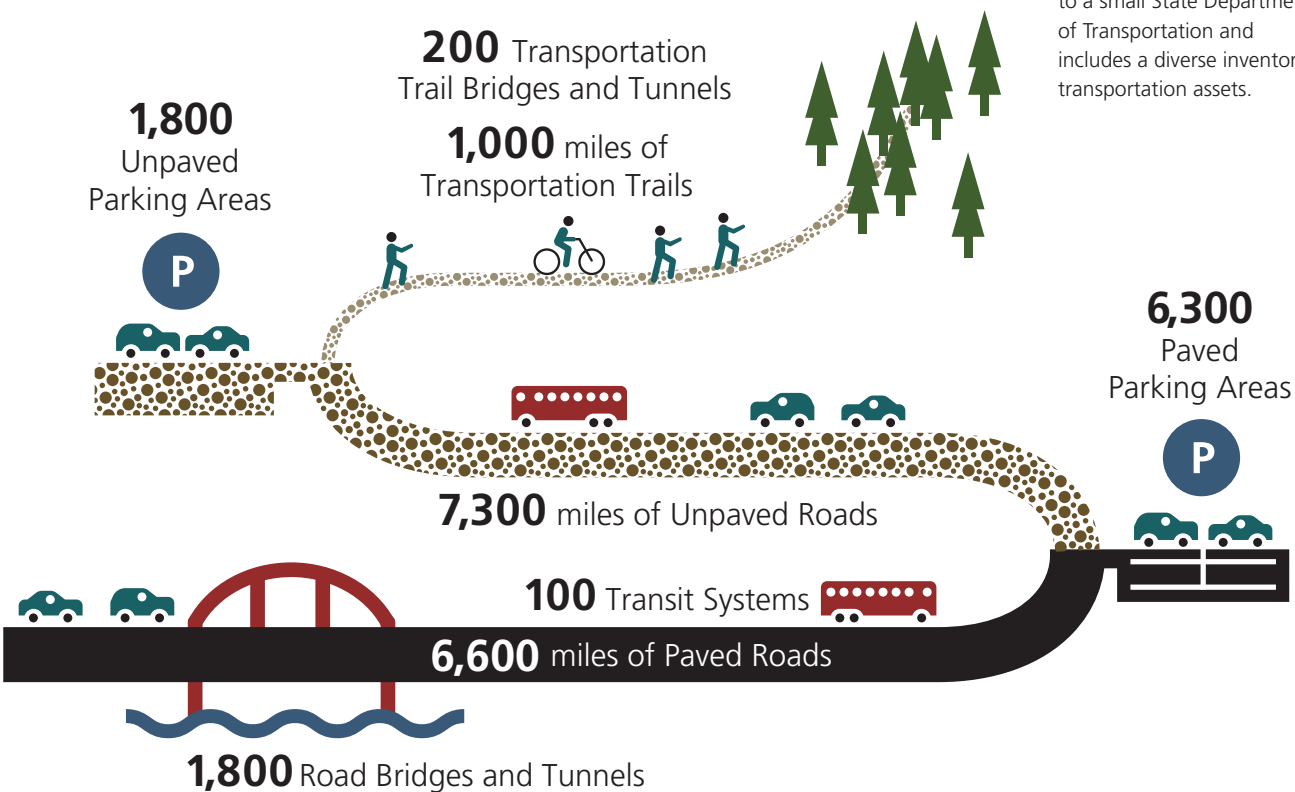
The types of NPS transportation assets vary significantly across park units and by region, accounting for different visitation patterns and geographical, historical, and cultural characteristics. As shown in Figure 3, roadways and parking are by far the most common means of providing access to NPS park units. The Alaska Region is one notable exception, where many park units are not accessible by road and visitors must instead rely on boats, airplanes, over-the-snow transportation, and other modes of transportation.

Roads and parkways of the NPS transportation system often connect with bus services, ferries, trains, and transportation trails, allowing for multimodal trips, especially in major western parks and those in urban areas. Many NPS multimodal transportation networks are integrated with local and regional transportation networks to provide visitors with more seamless access, and frequently improve the mobility and quality of life of local residents. Figure 4 illustrates 2023 NPS transit systems passenger boardings by park.



Shuttle buses at Zion National Park.  
Credit: Jim - stock.adobe.com

**Figure 3:** Approximate Scale of NPS Transportation System



The NPS transportation system is similar in scope and scale to a small State Department of Transportation and includes a diverse inventory of transportation assets.

**Figure 4:** Transit System Passenger Boardings





# Challenges and Opportunities

## Maintaining and Modernizing NPS Transportation Systems

The NPS transportation asset portfolio is extensive, diverse, and aging. A significant proportion of the NPS transportation system is more than 60 years old; many assets are approaching the need for major reinvestment and modernization to continue their useful life or to improve safety and performance in-line with today's standards. Expanding systems where necessary to meet visitor access needs, and incorporating new NPS units poses an additional challenge, but it also presents a unique planning opportunity.

## Expanding Access

Providing the public with access to experience and enjoy their public lands is central to the National Park Service mission. The National Park Service will support the implementation of the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act. This law, passed in January 2025, provides new policies that seek to improve access to outdoor recreation opportunities by improving data, expanding parking, simplifying permitting, and cooperating with gateway communities.

## Aging Population

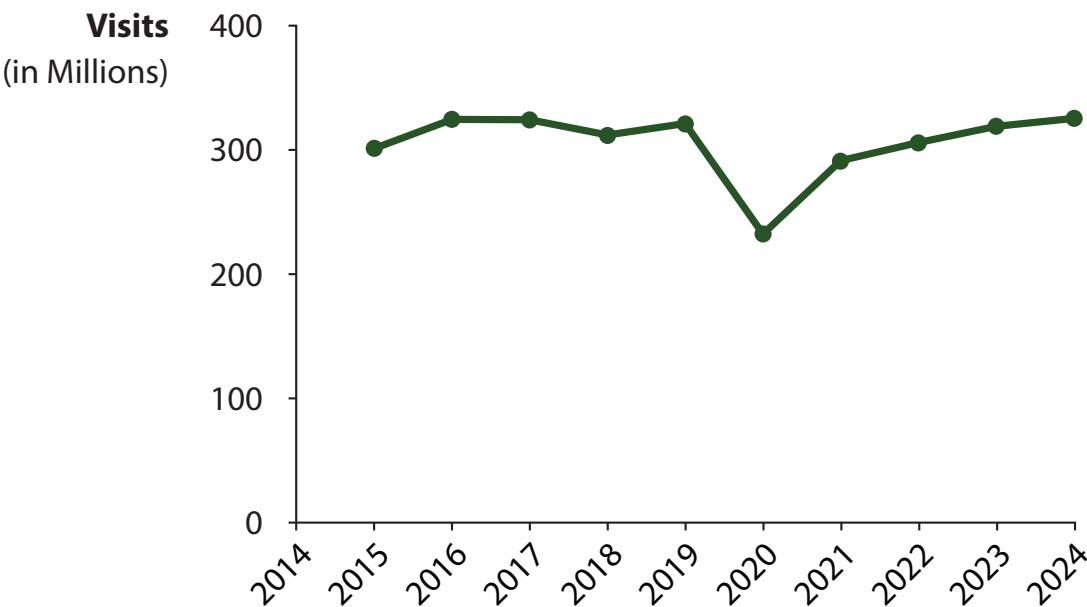
The nation's mobility and transportation needs evolve as the country grows older. The proportion of America's population aged 65 and over has been growing as a share of the overall population for at least the last three decades, and the trend is accelerating with time. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 50 million people in the U.S.—about 1 in 6 adults—belonged to this age bracket in 2020. Accommodating more older adults and people with mobility challenges will be a key challenge for the National Park Service.

# Changing Visitation Patterns

Trends in how and when people visit are changing in many parks, creating a need for the National Park Service to monitor trends and provide efficient transportation services that maintain both positive experiences for visitors and benefits to neighboring communities. Visitation is trending toward front country areas and “iconic” parks such as Arches National Park or Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The average duration of visits has decreased. Seasonal trends in some parks have been upended, with “shoulder seasons” — the months just before and after the highest visitation times — sometimes recording as many visitors as peak visitation times. External factors like fuel prices and social media are all influencing which parks and which areas in parks are most visited (Figure 5).

**Figure 5:** Recent Recreation Visitation Trends (404 reporting park units)

Total recreation visits, for 404 reporting park units, reached an all-time high in 2024 and have increased modestly over the last decade. Source: NPS Visitor Use Statistics Program – Annual Visitation by Park





At Gateway National Recreation Area, soil erosion occurred as a result of Hurricane Sandy.



A sign at Panoramic Point Trail in Kings Canyon National Park provides accessibility information about the trail for visitors.



Shared micromobility, like this bikeshare system that operates at the National Mall under a special use permit, is a type of emerging mobility technology that is changing how visitors access some park units. *Credit: ep\_jhu - flickr.com*



# Infrastructure Resiliency

NPS transportation systems provide access to unique and often extreme environments. To maintain these systems, the National Park Service must identify and mitigate risks that can cause sudden closures, damage, or service degradation. Heavy precipitation, landslides, strong storms, volcanic eruptions, and wildfires are just a few of the hazards that the National Park Service faces in maintaining access to some of the country's most special places. Given the importance of digital infrastructure systems, cyber threats pose a new kind of challenge. Planning for resilience and adaptation across varied landscapes is both a monumental challenge and an opportunity to better integrate resource protection into NPS transportation systems.

## Deepen Connections with Gateway Communities

The National Park Service has a valuable opportunity to ensure access to facilities, programs, services, and experiences, particularly for gateway communities and nearby residents to enjoy national parks and maximize economic opportunities. Multiple transportation modes are needed to ensure access, particularly those that provide safe, reliable, pleasant, easily accessible, and affordable access for families. The NPS transportation system is the backbone on which all visitor experiences rely, connecting national parks with nearby communities. In 2023, the National Park Service recorded more than 325 million visits and visitors spent an estimated \$26.4 billion in local gateway regions. These expenditures supported 415,000 jobs and resulted in more than \$56 billion of economic output in the national economy.

## Transportation Technology Innovation and Changing Visitor Expectations

The National Park Service has an opportunity to identify and implement new technologies that improve visitor access and protect cultural and natural resources. Emerging transportation technologies can create new options that enhance visitor experience. However, staying up to date with ever-evolving technological advances often poses a challenge for the NPS transportation system. Meanwhile, visitor's expectations have evolved as innovations like cellphone service, widespread smartphone adoption, and nearly ubiquitous Wi-Fi access have become the norm in public spaces across the United States. The National Park Service must integrate transportation technologies in a context-sensitive manner, keeping in mind the financial and human resources required for their implementation, and consider the anticipated longevity of any new technologies while balancing visitor expectations for modern amenities.

## By the Numbers: New and Expanded Potential Fund Sources for NPS Transportation

**\$2.38 Billion** available to transportation projects under the Great American Outdoors Act's Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) between FY2021-25.<sup>2</sup>

**\$175 Million** available to Federal Lands Management Agencies under the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Grant program between FY2022-26.<sup>3</sup>

**\$58 Billion** total IIJA discretionary grant funding available from FY2022-26 for which the National Park Service is an eligible entity (either directly or through partnerships).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The National Park Service is authorized to use up to 35% of the \$6.8 Billion share of LRF funds on transportation.

<sup>3</sup> Congress may appropriate additional funds to the program on an annual basis throughout the lifecycle of IIJA.

<sup>4</sup> Figure assumes full appropriations of all programs throughout the lifespan of IIJA.

## Transportation Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

There is perhaps more public interest and excitement today about improving visitor access to national parks than ever before, and there are myriad opportunities for the National Park Service to collaborate with stakeholders across jurisdictions to do so. State DOTs are required to consult the National Park Service when developing their transportation plans, but establishing a more integrated transportation planning approach with active cooperation between the National Park Service, state and local governments can yield benefits for everyone. Integrated planning approaches have the potential to improve connectivity and accessibility of local transportation systems in and outside of parks, the benefits of which can be shared by community members and park visitors. Economic benefits and improved quality of life for local communities are possible as a result. Integrated planning approaches allow for local expertise of partners to help solve and mitigate negative impacts of visitation in local communities, and they can address barriers to access for local populations (Figure 6).

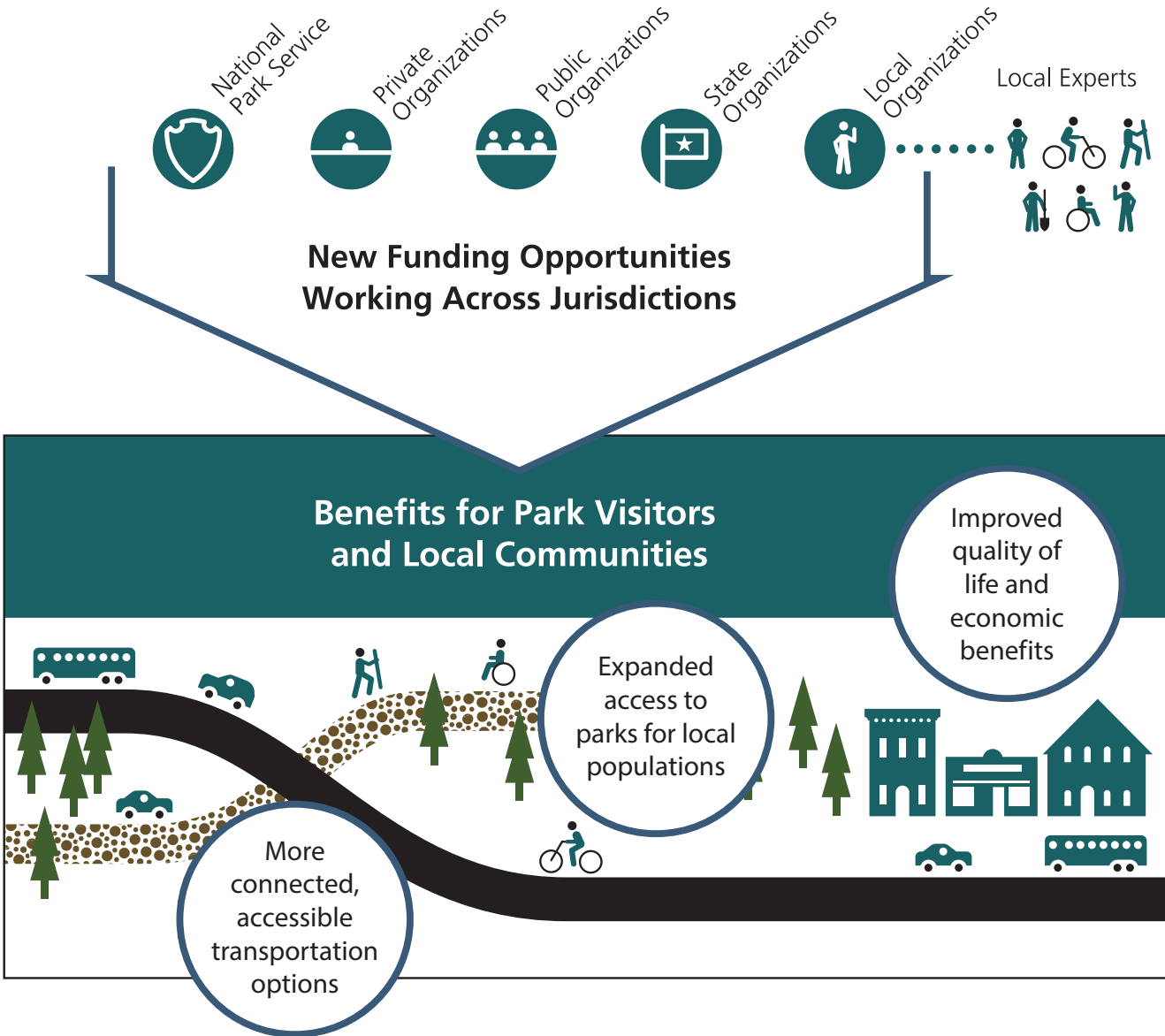
## New Programs and Funding Sources

The National Park Service will benefit from the historic investments created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). These laws provide the National Park Service with opportunities to make once-in-a-generation investments in maintaining, modernizing, and when necessary, expanding its transportation system. Public-private partnerships also provide opportunities to increase efficiency.

Realizing these opportunities, however, requires a greater emphasis on building partnerships and competing for grants. It will also require the National Park Service to do more advanced planning to demonstrate the transformational potential of proposed investments and increase the number of “shovel ready” projects. Additionally, operating in an environment where a larger share of transportation funding comes through grants and partnerships may require a change in thinking about how projects are developed, scoped, and prioritized.

# Figure 6: Transportation Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement

The NPS can seek partnership and stakeholder engagement opportunities to yield benefits for all partners and stakeholders involved and impacted by park transportation planning decisions.







Glacier National Park

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# Transportation Investment Strategy

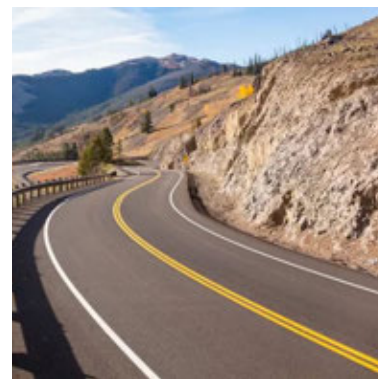
The National Park Service relies on a variety of funding sources to maintain its transportation system. NPS staff work with strategic partners to analyze, plan for, and make routine and legacy investments that support access for more than 300 million annual visits. This chapter describes how NPS transportation investments have historically been funded, forecasted future resources, overall transportation needs, and the investment strategy the National Park Service will pursue to best meet those needs.<sup>1</sup>

## Transportation Funding Trends

### Major Funding Sources

There are two major types of funding for NPS transportation assets: **Annual** funding programs and individual **One-Time** funding allocations. Annual programs provide reliable, consistent resources that can be planned on a multi-year basis (such as FLTP, the only Annual funding program solely dedicated to transportation). One-Time funding, however, is awarded or programmed on a project-by-project basis and originates from grants, donations, and special programs. One-Time funding, from the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) [National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund](#) (LRF), the [Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects](#) (NSFLTP) program, and other programs, has become increasingly important and now makes up approximately one-third of all NPS transportation funding (Figure 7).

Continued access to both types of funding is critical to maintaining the NPS transportation system and making progress on strategic priorities such as



Yellowstone Grand Loop Road  
Reconstruction made possible with  
NSFLTP program grant.

improving safety, reinvesting in critical infrastructure, protecting natural resources, and expanding connectivity with gateway communities. Table 2 lists the largest funding sources for NPS transportation by type (Annual or One-Time) and by source.

## Transportation Investments FY2016 – 2021

Between fiscal years (FYs) 2016 to 2021, the National Park Service allocated or was awarded a total of \$3.5 billion for transportation projects (Figure 8). Approximately two-thirds (\$2.36 billion) came from Annual funding sources and one-third from One-Time funding (\$1.4 billion), with the majority of One-Time funding (\$727.4 million) coming in 2021 from LRF.<sup>2</sup>

Transportation funding was allocated across the NPS transportation asset portfolio. The largest share of funding supported the Paved Road and Bridge Network (86 percent), with a smaller portion supporting unpaved roads and parking, transit, and transportation trails (14 percent). Program administration, management systems, data collection, transportation planning and other non-project costs are included in these figures and comprise less than 3 percent of the total expenditures.

## Annual Funding Sources

Transportation funding from Annual sources is the foundation of the NPS transportation investment strategy. Annual funds provide predictable resources which can be planned and programmed over multiple years. The largest of these, and the only funding source dedicated to transportation, is the FLTP. This continues

to be the single largest source of funding for NPS transportation (66 percent of Annual funding from FYs 16-21 and 45 percent of all funding, including One-Time funding).

NPS Programs and Fee Programs comprise the majority of the remaining Annual funding sources. These sources fund both transportation and non-transportation projects. Although funding from these programs is not required to go to transportation projects, they have historically been an important transportation funding source.

In nominal terms, the National Park Service forecasts that Annual transportation funding will increase by approximately 12 percent overall in FY23-27 as compared with FY16-21 (Table 3). FLTP funding will increase in line with program authorizations in IIJA.

- FLTP funding will increase in line with program authorizations in IIJA, rising 21 percent (after reductions).
- Transportation funding from Fee Programs is forecasted to rise 10 percent.
- Transportation funding from other NPS Programs is forecasted to decline by 20 percent overall, led by declines in Line-Item Construction and Repair/Rehab funding.

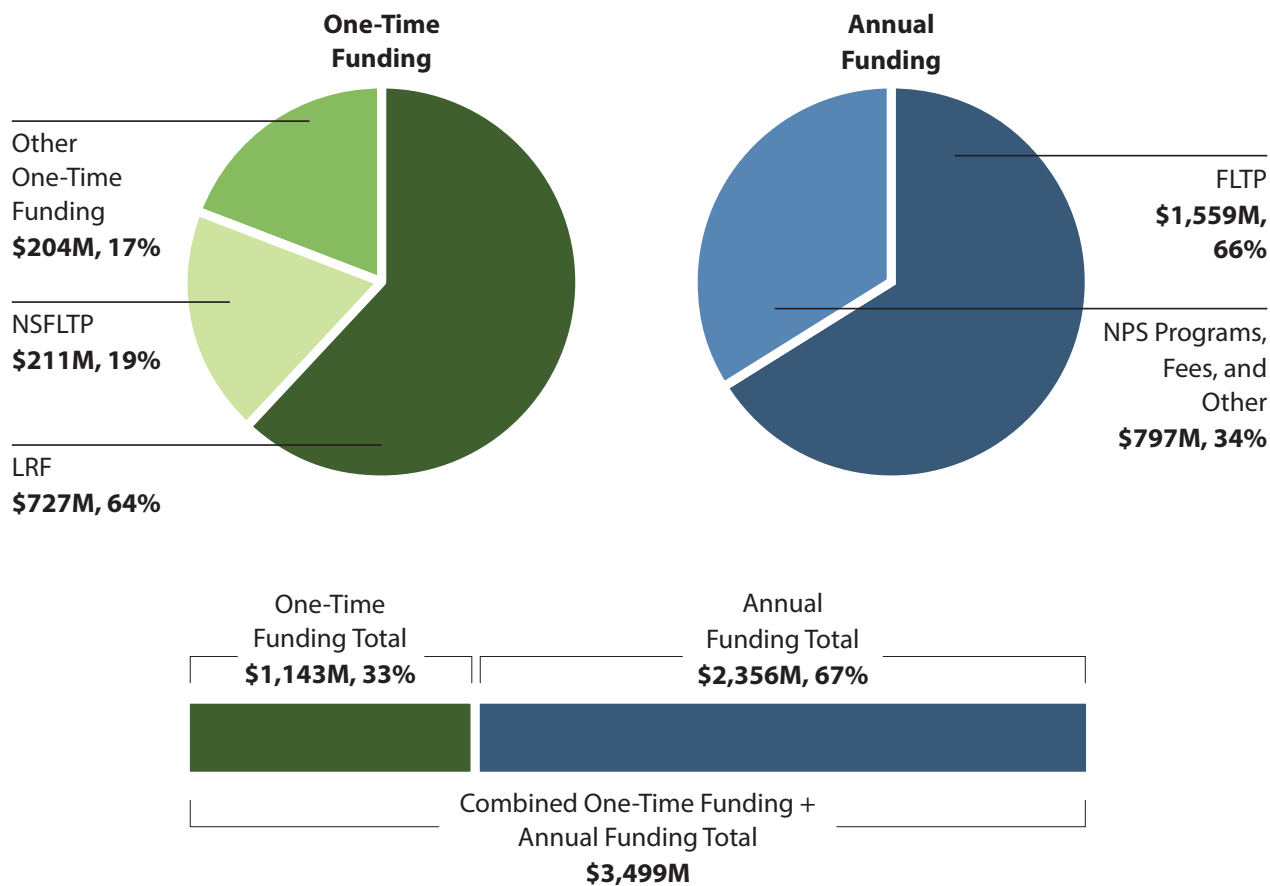
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1 The chapter includes a summary of financial investments from FY16-FY21 and forecasted resources for FY23-FY27. Data for FY22 was not finalized at the time the analysis was conducted and is represented as a gap year. This chapter does not include information about park-level operations and maintenance activities, which are largely accomplished using park base budgets, for which detailed cost data are not available.

2 All Annual values are presented in year-of-expenditures dollars (not adjusted for inflation). Throughout the NTS, Annual funds figures are based on expenditures and One-Time funds figures are based on funding announcements or awards for individual projects. The two largest sources of One-Time funding (LRF and NSFLTP) were only available for part of the past period reported (FY16- FY 21). NSFLTP was first funded in FY19 and LRF was first funded in FY21. If these programs had been available for the full six-year period, the relative contribution of One-Time funding would likely have been greater.



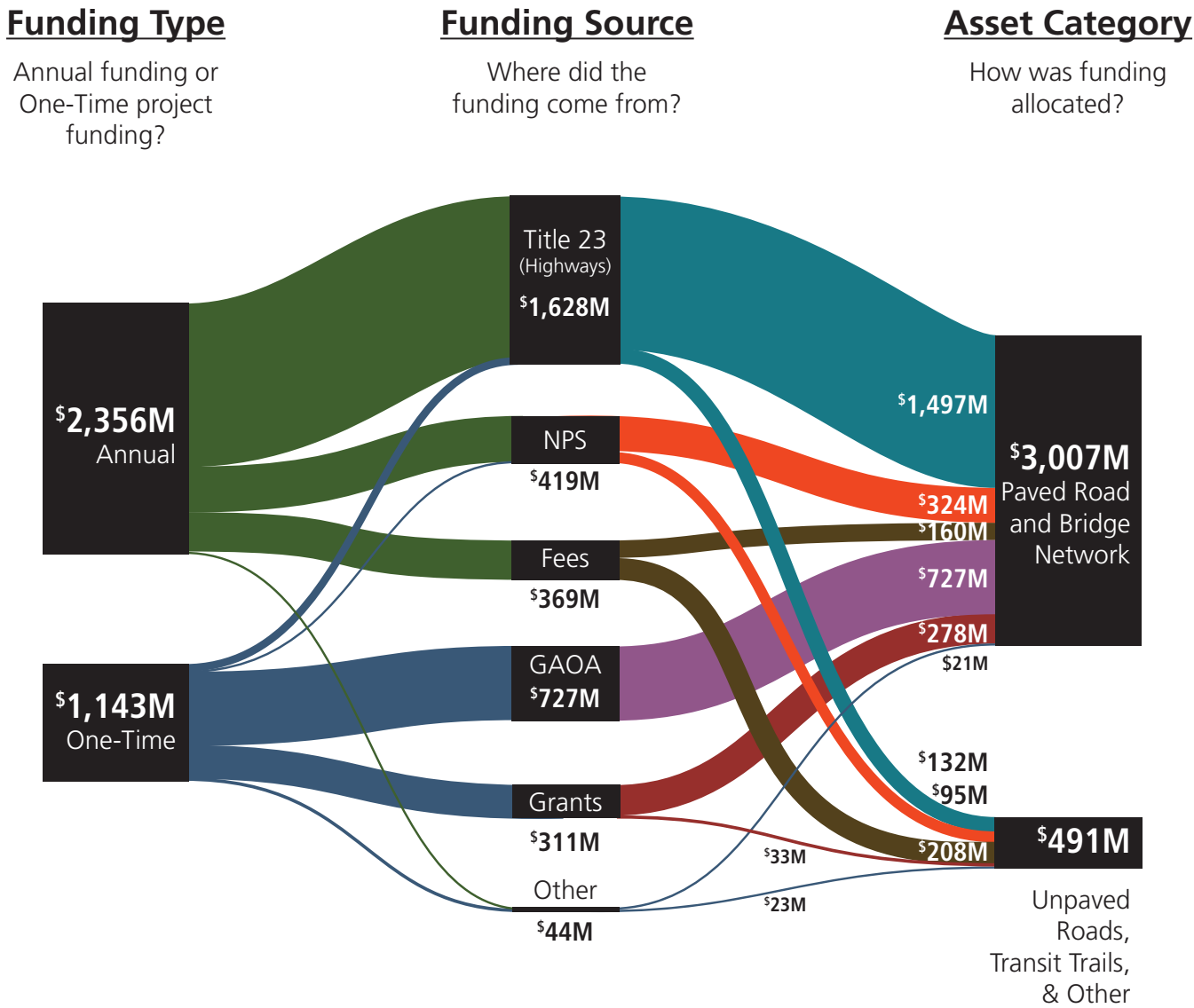
**Figure 7:** Cumulative NPS Transportation Funding, FY16-FY21 (millions \$)



**Table 2:** Major Funding Sources for NPS Transportation

Source	Type	Program
Highways Programs (USC Title 23)	Annual	Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP)
	One-Time	Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO)
NPS Programs (USC Title 54)	Annual	Cyclic Maintenance
	Annual	Line-Item Construction
	Annual	Repair/Rehabilitation
	One-Time	Emergency Storm & Flood Damage
Fee Programs	Annual	Recreation Fee Program
	Annual	Concessions Franchise Fee Program
Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Grants and Other	One-Time	Legacy Restoration Fund
	Annual	Reimbursable Agreements
	One-Time	Competitive Grants (all sources)
	One-Time	Donations

**Figure 8:** FY16-21 Sum of NPS Transportation Investments and One-Time Funding Announcements by Type and Fund Source (millions \$)



## Impacts of Inflation

Inflation will reduce the National Park Service's buying power and introduce significant financial uncertainty for its transportation system.

Historically, inflation in the general U.S. economy has been low, averaging between 0.1 and 3.2 percent between 2010 and 2020,<sup>3</sup> resulting in consumer products costing approximately 19 percent more in 2020 than in 2010. However, increased construction costs for transportation projects grew faster during the same period, experiencing an estimated 29 percent increase.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning in 2021, the U.S. economy experienced higher than average inflation in the general economy and in construction. From the last quarter of 2021 through the third quarter of 2022, average highway construction costs increased by more than 69 percent. Inflation has declined significantly from these peaks and increases in construction costs have moderated. However, it is unclear if future construction costs will be in line with historical averages.

Figure 9 shows the impact of inflation on the buying power of NPS FLTP funding from FY16-24, based on the National Highway Construction Cost Index. Highway construction costs have consistently outpaced nominal increases in authorizations, leading to a declining trend in the ability of the FLTP program to fund NPS transportation projects.

## Reductions in NPS FLTP Allocations:

NPS FLTP allocations are specified by FY in the statute. However, legislated “off-the-top” takedowns for specific programs and the [obligation limitation](#) imposed through the annual appropriations process reduce the amount of funding that is available to the National Park Service. Although the specific amounts vary, the NPS FLTP allocations specified in legislation for FY16-24 were reduced by more than 12 percent on average each year.

3 Consumer Price Index, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2023.

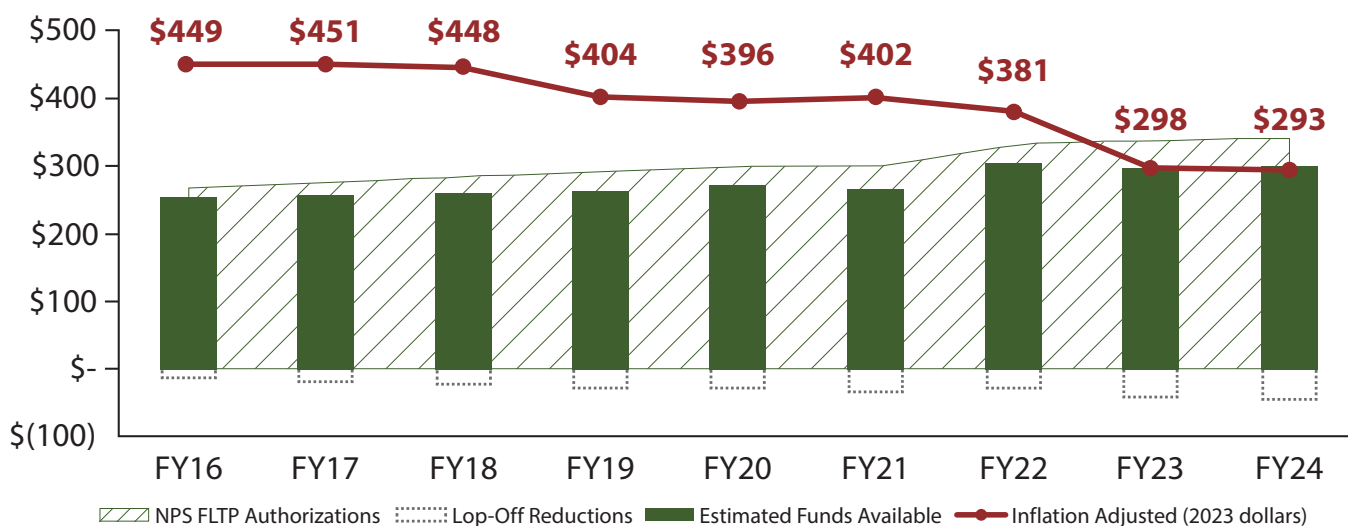
4 National Highway Construction Cost Index, Federal Highway Administration, 2023.

**Table 3:** Annual NPS Transportation Funding (millions \$) FY16-21 and Forecasted FY23-27

Source	Funding Program	Annual Average FY16 – 21	Forecasted Annual Average FY23 – 27	Forecasted Annual Average Change	Forecasted Annual Average % Change
Highways Programs (USC Title 23)	Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP)	\$259.85	\$315.09	\$55.24	21%
NPS Programs (USC Title 54)	Cyclic Maintenance	\$35.94	\$35.94	\$0	0%
	Line-Item Construction	\$17.47	\$8.61	-\$8.86	-51%
	Repair/Rehabilitation	\$13.08	\$7.70	-\$5.38	-41%
	Other NPS Programs	\$3.14	\$3.14	\$0	0%
Fee Programs	Recreation Fee Program	\$54.61	\$60.64	\$6.03	11%
	Concessions Franchise Fee Program	\$6.93	\$6.92	-\$0.01	0%
Other	Reimbursable Agreements	\$1.71	\$1.71	\$0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$392.72</b>	<b>\$439.76</b>	<b>\$47.04</b>	<b>12%</b>

**Figure 9:** NPS FLTP Inflation-Adjusted Buying Power, 2016-2024 (millions \$)

Source: [National Highway Construction Cost Index](#)





## Five Largest NPS Transportation One-Time Funding Awards, FY16-21

### George Washington Memorial Parkway North Section

**Rehabilitation:** This project rehabilitated and repaired a 7.6-mile section of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, addressed serious deterioration of the roadway and drainage system, completed structural bridge repairs, implemented safety countermeasures, and improved travel time reliability. Approximately 26 million vehicles use the parkway annually. *\$208 million of LRF funding announced for this project in FY21.*



George Washington Memorial Parkway. Credit: JudithAnne - stock.adobe.com

**Blue Ridge Parkway Reconstruction:** This project reconstructed and rehabilitated a portion of the Blue Ridge Parkway within North Carolina and the associated overlooks and parking areas. Road safety audits in 2012, 2017, and 2018 indicated that roadway edge rutting presented safety challenges along many sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway—one of the busiest units in the National Park Service. The road is critical to maintaining the park’s purpose, significance, and resources. *\$124 million of LRF funding announced for this project in FY21.*



Blue Ridge Parkway. Credit: Dave Allen - stock.adobe.com

**Arlington Memorial Bridge Rehabilitation:** Serving as the “ceremonial entrance to the capitol,” the Arlington Memorial Bridge rehabilitation was one of the largest projects in NPS history. Workers repaired or replaced the bridge’s foundations, concrete supports, deck, and sidewalks and installed 450 pre-cast concrete panels. FHWA engineers worked with the project contractor to use innovative methods that sped up construction and lowered costs. *\$90 million of FASTLANE and INFRA grant funding awarded for this project in FY16.*

**Tamiami Trail Project:** The project repaired, elevated, and constructed several bridges across a 6.5-mile section of US-41/Tamiami Trail adjacent to Everglades National Park to help restore the natural flow of surface waters and helping ward off saltwater intrusion into groundwater resources, mitigating the negative impacts the road creates to the natural environment in South Florida. *\$60 million of NSFLTP grant funding awarded for this project in FY18 and FY19.*



Tamiami Trail. Credit: Francisco - stock.adobe.com

**Natchez Trace Parkway Project:** This project rehabilitated a section of the Natchez Trace Parkway in Mississippi and Alabama, with heavy resurfacing, restoration, and rehabilitation to improve several miles of paved parkway. Raised pavement markers were installed to improve safety throughout the project area. *\$54 million of NSFLTP grant funding awarded for this project in FY21.*

# One-Time Funding Sources

One-Time funding sources play a major role in NPS transportation. These sources allow the National Park Service to, among other things, accomplish legacy projects such as large-scale road and bridge rehabilitations or transit system recapitalizations that the agency's Annual programs would not otherwise allow for. Table 4 provides a summary of NPS One-Time transportation funding awarded or announced from FYs 16-21. These funds include major grants, donations, special programs, and emergency relief funding for natural disaster recovery. During this time period, One-Time funding comprised approximately one-third of all NPS transportation funding.

## The Impact of LRF and NSFLTP

LRF was the largest source of One-Time funding for transportation between FY16-FY21. Discretionary grants such as the NSFLTP and partnership donations have also been important sources of One-Time funding for NPS transportation priorities. The five largest projects that received One-Time funding between FY16 and FY21 received more than \$535 million. Over the six-year period, this represents an average of \$89 million per year. One-Time funding for these projects represents an addition of more than 20 percent per year above the average of Annual funding sources (for all projects).

## Legacy Restoration Fund

LRF has been particularly transformative for the NPS in recent years, with more than \$1.3 billion in transportation investments announced between FY21 and FY24 (Figure 10).<sup>5</sup> Congress authorized this five-year program in 2020 (set to expire at the end of FY25), providing the National Park Service with a funding mechanism to accomplish large-scale infrastructure projects that address legacy deferred maintenance

needs. The LRF program is limited to 35 percent investment in transportation projects.

## Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program

Competitive grant programs have also been a major source of funding in recent years for NPS transportation projects, providing more than \$339 million from FY16 through FY22. Approximately 70 percent (\$238M) of these grant funds have come from NSFLTP (Figure 11), which has contributed funds to major roadway, bridge, and transit projects.

By law, NSFLTP funding is split between Tribal governments and Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMAs) like the National Park Service. Each year (beginning in FY22), at least one award is required to be for an NPS unit with more than 3 million annual visitors. The program has a minimum project size of \$12.5 million. The National Park Service has received an average of 42 percent of NSFLTP funding available to FLMAs — a total of \$238 million. However, NPS needs exceed one project per year, and without additional appropriations,<sup>6</sup> NSFLTP's annual funding will be reduced dramatically, and the amount NPS could potentially receive would similarly decline.

## Future Outlook

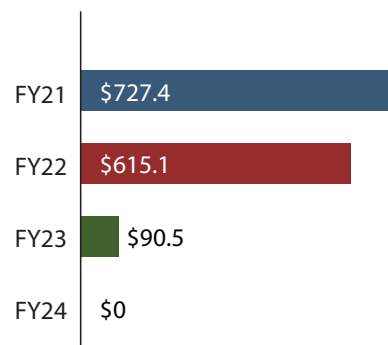
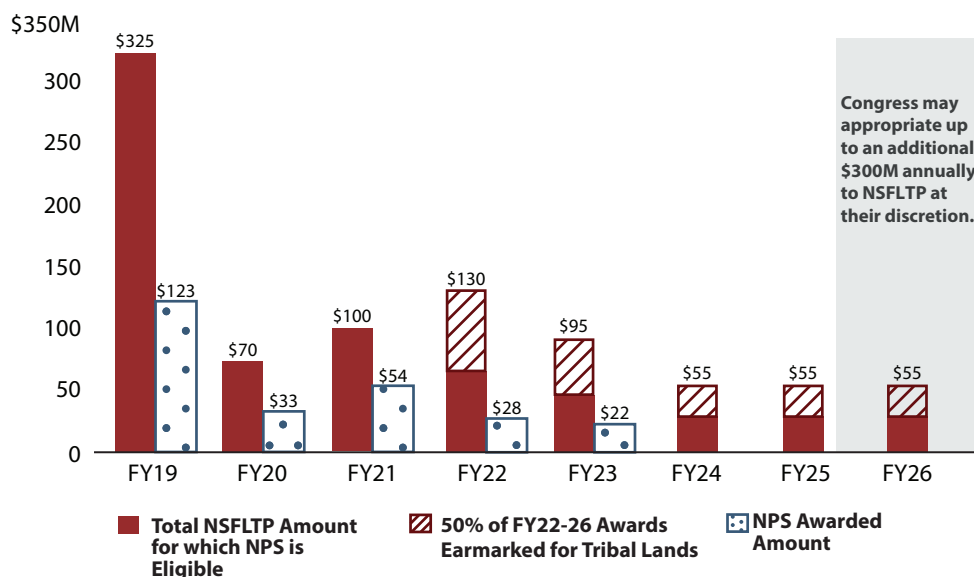
Together, LRF and NSFLTP made up more than 80 percent of all One-Time transportation funding and more than 25 percent of total NPS transportation funding between FY16 and FY21. With the expected expiration of LRF, and less NSFLTP funding available, future One-Time funding awards for NPS transportation are likely to decline. The National Park Service will continue to leverage these programs for large and complex projects and will explore other external grant and partnership opportunities as well.

5 In this chapter, FY21 LRF project funding announcements are included in historical One-Time funding. Funding announcements for FY22+ are included in forecasted future One-Time funding. Figures are as of March 19, 2024.

6 Under IJA, Congress may appropriate up to an additional \$300M each year to NSFLTP through the annual appropriations process.

**Table 4:** NPS One-Time Transportation Funding, FY16-21 (millions \$)

Source	Program	Funds Awarded or Announced
Highways Programs (USC Title 23)	Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO)	\$68.9 M
Highways Programs (USC Title 23)	Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program (NSFLTP)	\$211.3 M
NPS Programs (USC Title 54)	Emergency Storm & Flood Damage	\$1.5 M
Great American Outdoors Act	National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF)	\$727.4 M
Various	External Competitive Grants	\$100 M
Various	Donations	\$33.5 M
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,142.6 M</b>

**Figure 10:** LRF Transportation Project Funding Announcements, FY21-24 (millions \$) as of March 19, 2024**Figure 11:** NSFLTP Funding and NPS Awards FY19-26 (millions \$)

# Investment Needs

With a large, multimodal transportation system serving visitors in every state and territory and in many challenging and unique environments, the National Park Service faces substantial costs to maintain its transportation network and address strategic priorities.

Transportation investment needs can be described in five categories: Maintenance; Modernization and Renewal; System Expansion or Rightsizing; Advancing Strategic Priorities; and Administration, System Management, and Planning. NPS transportation management systems track the conditions and performance of the system and identify asset management needs. Transportation planning and partnerships help to identify needs for other types of investments to advance strategic priorities, and when warranted, system expansion or rightsizing.

## Maintenance

Transportation infrastructure requires ongoing investment to remain in good condition and perform well for its intended useful life. This includes preventive, recurring, and cyclical maintenance activities that fall short of a full replacement or recapitalization. This category comprises a large proportion of NPS transportation needs and has historically been the primary emphasis of transportation investments.

## Recapitalization, Alteration, and Replacement

Even when best management practices are followed, transportation assets eventually require replacement. Recapitalizing the aging NPS transportation system will be a major category of need in the coming decades. Assets also sometimes require changes to improve safety, reduce environmental impact, or updates to meet today's standards. These alterations are often made in tandem with recapitalization or replacement projects to minimize costs.

## New Construction and Divestiture

Changes to the NPS transportation network are sometimes required when new park units are added or when operational needs of existing units change. This may include the expansion of roadways or parking, development of transportation trails, establishment of new transit services, or the divestiture of assets no longer needed. This category is relatively small compared to maintaining, and modernizing, and renewing the existing system. Because of financial constraints, the National Park Service carefully examines the fiscal and operational sustainability of any potential system expansion before making these investments.

## Advancing Strategic Priorities

This National Transportation Strategy identifies several strategic priorities including reducing transportation fatalities, improving collaboration and connections with neighboring gateway communities, investing in critical infrastructure, and preserving natural resources. These needs are often addressed through maintenance of the existing transportation system, but will also require additional investments, the scale and scope of which have not been fully studied or quantified. Transportation planning investments are needed to better understand the scope of these needs and to develop projects that will address them.

## Administration, System Management, and Planning

Making wise investments requires advance planning and data-driven decision making. The National Park Service must devote a small percentage of transportation resources to collecting and analyzing information on the condition and performance of the transportation system, the ways visitors use the system and developing plans for future improvements. This is the smallest category of NPS transportation needs and historically has comprised less than three percent of total transportation investments.



# Maintaining the NPS Transportation System

The National Park Service and its FHWA partners continuously monitor and assess the condition of NPS transportation infrastructure. Using industry standard modeling and asset management platforms, NPS facility managers and transportation program managers develop cost estimates of future investment needs to maintain the transportation system. These estimates do not include potential alteration, expansion or rightsizing costs, program administration and planning costs, or potential investments needed to advance strategic transportation priorities that cannot be addressed through the course of regular maintenance.

The annual cost of maintaining the current NPS transportation system in its current condition is estimated to be \$458 million per year on average. An additional \$272 million per year is needed to reach target condition levels (average “good” condition). Figure 13 shows how these costs break down between the Paved Road and Bridge Network and other transportation asset types such as unpaved roads and parking, transit systems, and transportation trails. In percentage terms, this breakdown is consistent with past NPS transportation expenditure patterns.<sup>7</sup>

## Park Operations and Maintenance

In addition to the costs shown in Figure 13, park units invest staff time and park base funding in the operations and maintenance of transportation assets. This includes major activities such as clearing snow and ice from roadways and parking areas, as well as less frequent preventive maintenance such as clearing debris from culverts or regrading gravel surfaces. This is a critical aspect of transportation asset management which is not easy to quantify because investments are often made in terms of staff hours or multiuse equipment at

the park level. Because park operations budgets have been relatively flat over many years, these needs often compete with other basic park operations needs.

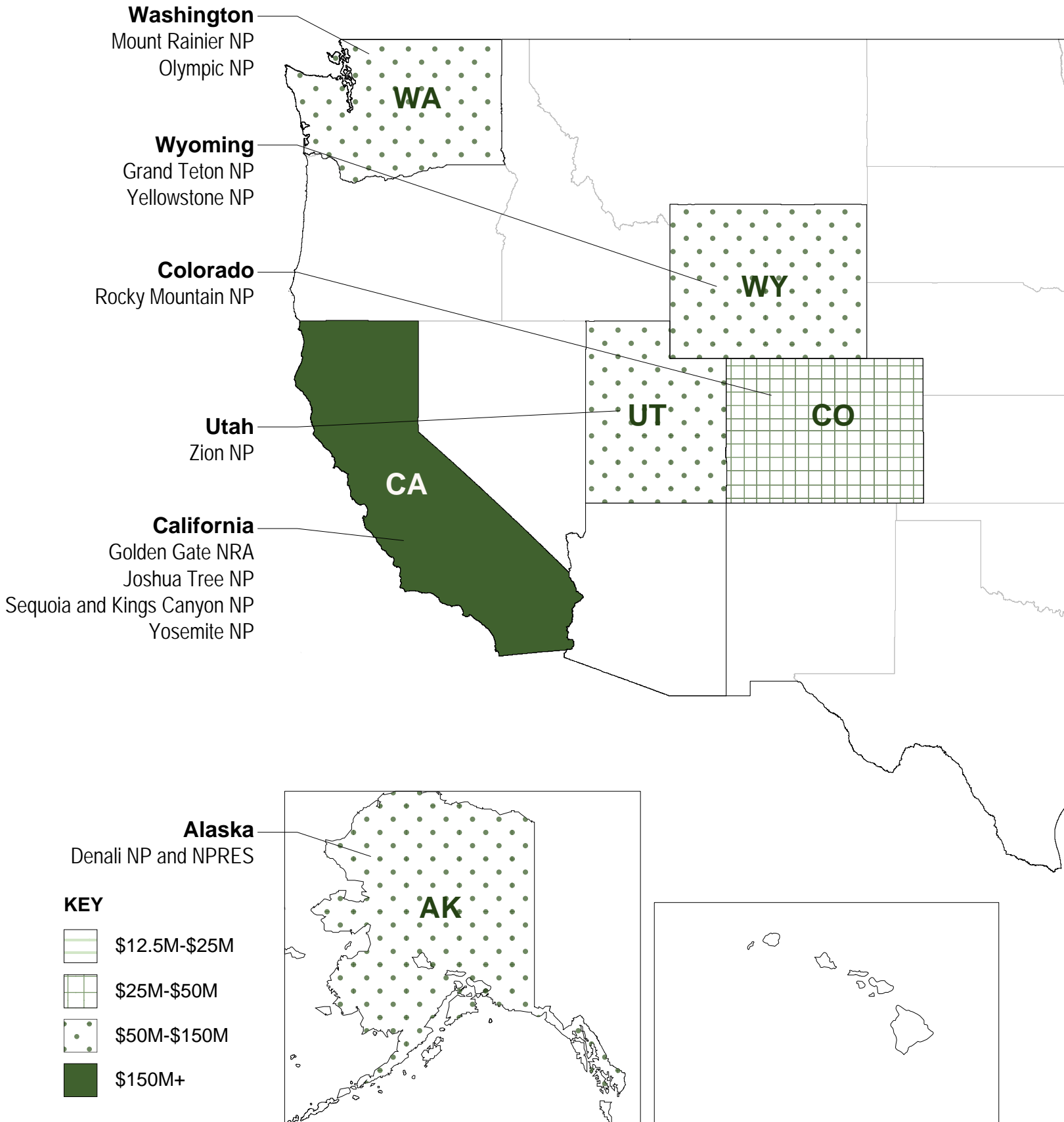
## Major Projects

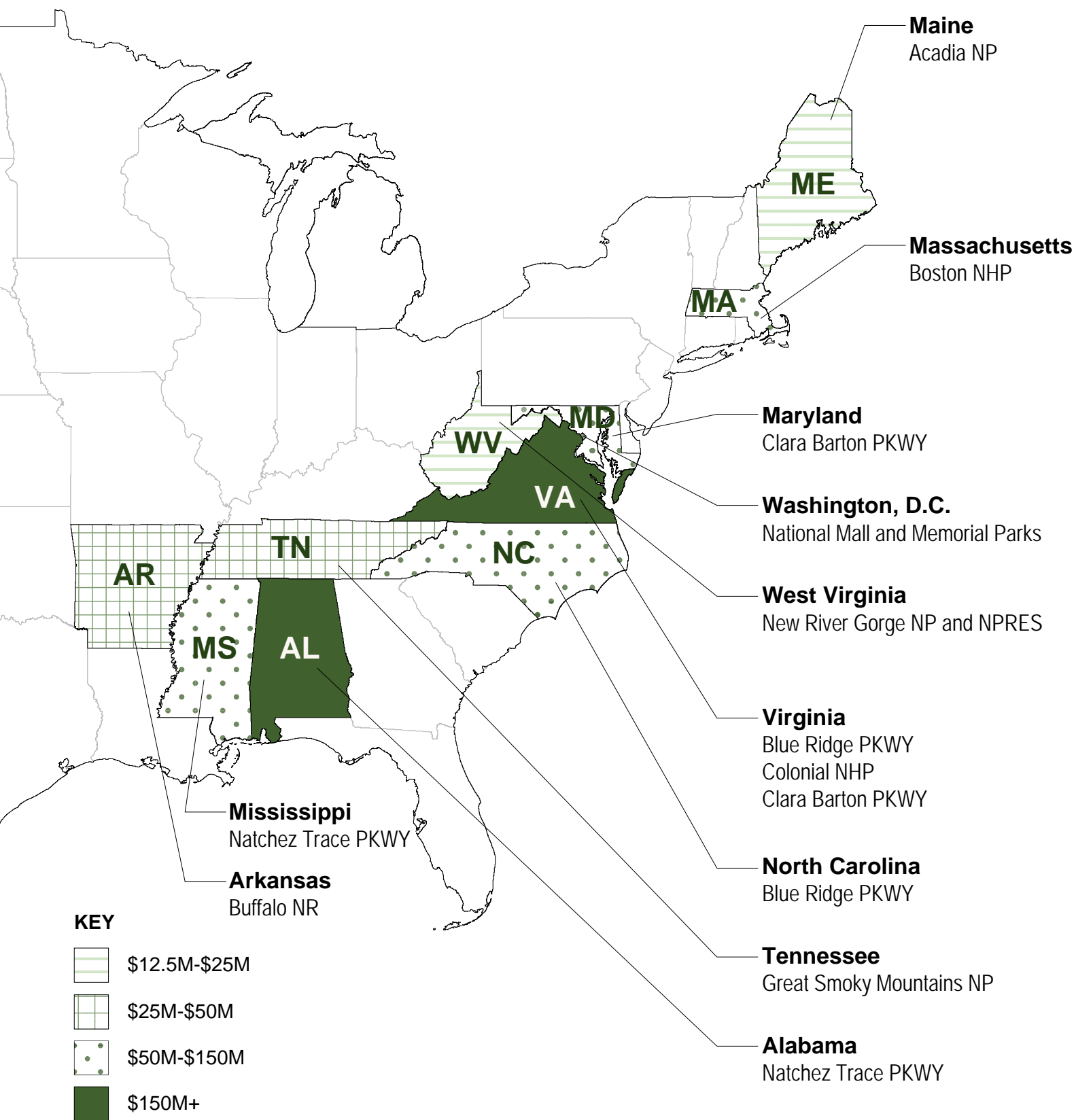
When transportation assets reach the end of their useful life, they may require a major project to recapitalize or replace the asset, or to alter it to meet modern standards. Examples of this project type include bridge replacements, full-depth roadway reconstruction projects, vessel replacements, and occasionally the construction of a new transportation asset. These kinds of projects are rare in the National Park Service, but with an aging transportation asset portfolio, they are anticipated to come up more frequently as time goes on.

Major projects are challenging to fund, and beyond the capacity of Annual funding programs, requiring One-Time funding from grants, partnerships, or special appropriations to accomplish. These project needs are also difficult to forecast because the unique details of these projects have a large impact of eventual project costs. Figure 12 shows a map of major project needs that the National Park Service has identified, and Appendix A provides additional information about these needs. The National Park Service will require One-Time funding to accomplish these projects as their anticipated costs far outpace NPS Annual funding forecasts. The National Park Service is working to better understand these and other major project needs, and will continue to update information in this area as needs estimates are improved.

<sup>7</sup> Annual costs estimates for maintaining and improving the condition of the NPS transportation system are based on modeling using NPS pavement, bridge, and facility management systems, using the National Transportation Strategy asset inventory.

# Figure 12: Map of NPS Transportation Legacy Investment Projects





## Understanding Other Types of Transportation Investment Needs

Unlike with transportation asset management and transit fleet vehicles, the National Park Service does not have mature systems for estimating the potential costs of other types of investment needs. This does not mean these needs are less important.

The National Park Service is committed to addressing the goals and objectives in this National Transportation Strategy, including those which may require additional investments. For example, natural resource preservation may require relocating infrastructure or retrofitting it with new materials. Providing better access for neighboring gateway communities may require providing more transportation options, such as trail connections, increasing shuttle services, and partnering with transportation providers in the community. Ensuring that NPS transportation systems provide the safest traveling experience possible will require engineering improved designs.

To better understand the scope and scale of these and other needs, the National Park Service will continue to invest in park level transportation planning, scientific analysis, management systems, and engagement with state and local partners. Over time, these needs will be better reflected in the estimated costs to maintain and modernize the existing system or in system expansion needs.

## Annual Funding Gap

Forecasted Annual funding sources fall short of anticipated annual investment needs to achieve target condition levels for NPS transportation assets by more than \$290 million per year. Forecasted annual funding (\$440 million per year) is insufficient to maintain even current condition levels for all asset categories. Additionally, the buying power of NPS transportation funding is likely to continue to decline as a result of construction cost inflation. As a result, this funding gap will widen over the life of IIJA, absent any change in appropriations (Figure 14).

As described above, additional funding will be needed to address major projects and other strategic priorities that cannot be addressed through the routine maintenance and recapitalization of existing transportation infrastructure. As these costs become better understood, the funding gap will widen further.

**The funding gap shows how critical it is that the National Park Service continue to have access to One-Time funding from LRF, NSFLTP, partnerships, and other One-Time funding sources.**

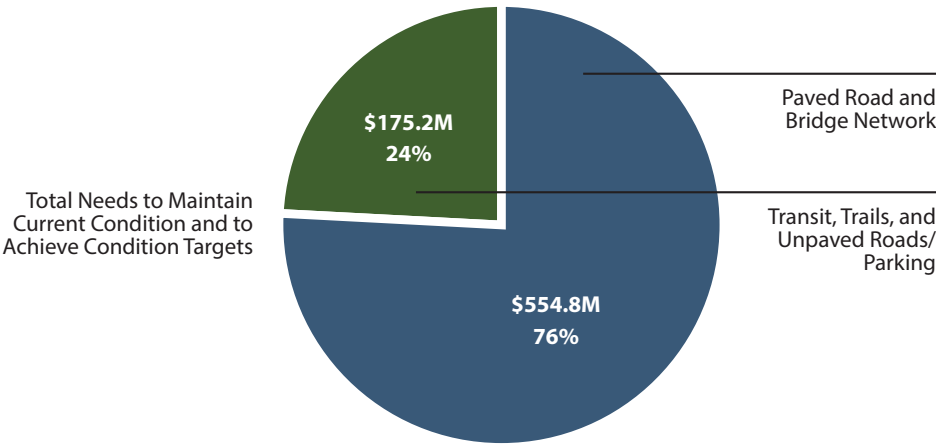
### Recapitalizing the NPS Transit and Vessel Fleet

The National Park Service will need to undertake a major recapitalization of its transit and vessel fleet in the coming years. Ninety-four vehicles are expected to exceed their service life within the next 10 years, with an estimated replacement cost of \$100 million. Parks with estimated transit fleet and vessel replacement costs over \$5 million during the next 10 years include Acadia, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Harpers Ferry, Isle Royale, Yosemite, and Zion. There will be additional costs to upgrade and retrofit vehicle maintenance facilities and install fueling infrastructure where needed. These substantial costs will be addressed over time, as vehicle fleets reach the ends of their useful lifespan and require replacement, or strategically when partnership opportunities are identified. One-Time funding sources such as grants facilitate recapitalization projects that annual programs would not otherwise allow for.

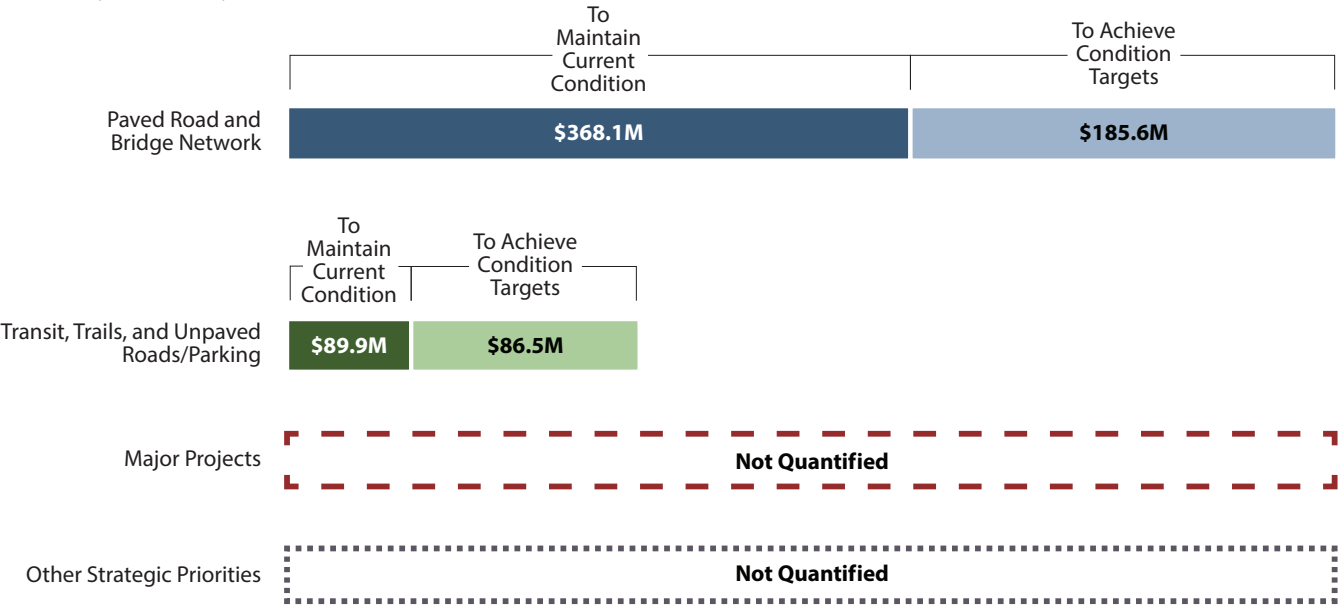


**Figure 13:** Estimated Annual Funding Needs for NPS Transportation Assets (millions \$)

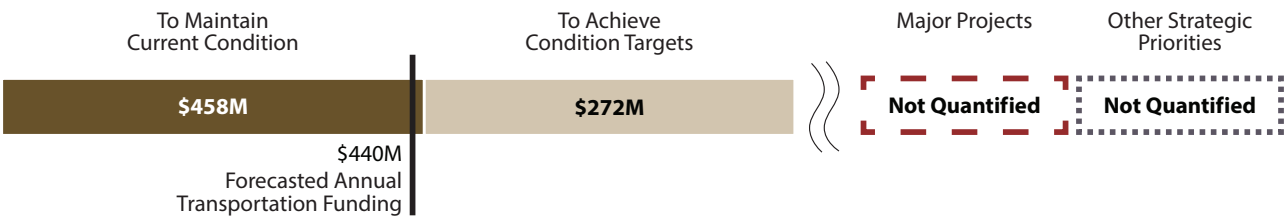
**Needs Summary**



**Needs by Category**



**Figure 14:** Annual Funding Gap



# NPS Transportation Investment Strategy

This section describes the overall investment strategy that the National Park Service will pursue to ensure the transportation system is maintained in a state of good repair and to address other strategic priorities. The investment strategy balances investments in different transportation modes with a focus on maintaining current condition levels and replacing transit vehicles which are beyond their service life.

To address the gap between forecasted transportation resources and investment needs, and to fund strategic priorities which are beyond the capacity of the Annual programs, the National Park Service will continue to pursue One-Time funding sources such as external grants and partnerships. Successful grant applications and partnerships will be critical to the long-term success of the NPS transportation program, particularly with the planned sunset of the LRF program in 2025.

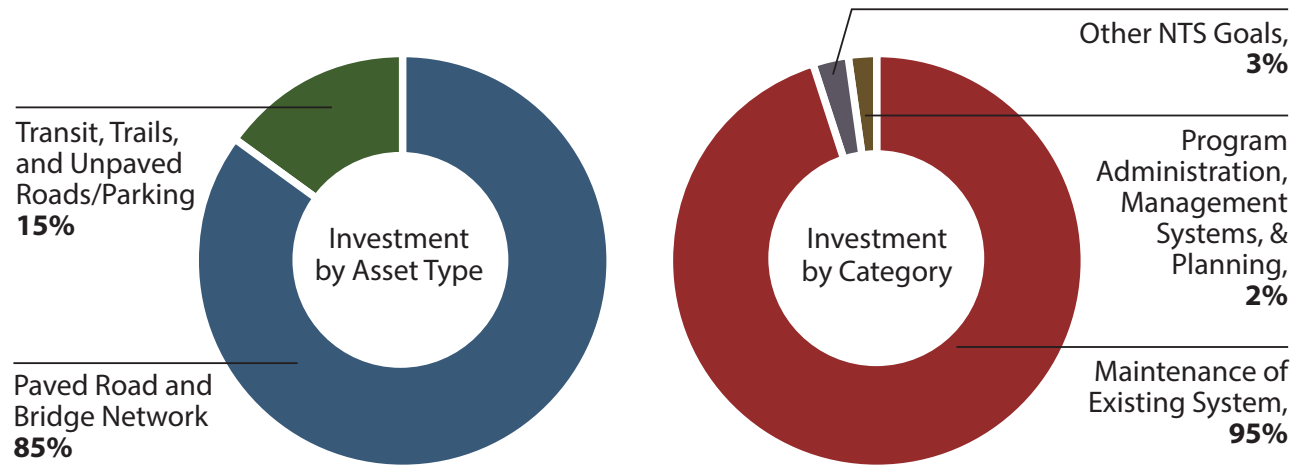
# Baseline Investment Strategy

The NTS investment strategy builds on the investment approach from FY16-21, which successfully maintained the average condition of the NPS transportation network. Due to the forecasted funding gap, the vast majority of Annual funding must be dedicated to life-cycle asset management. Limited progress on NTS goals outside of sustaining the existing transportation system is anticipated if the National Park Service is limited to Annual funding sources.

Because the paved road and bridge network comprises the majority of NPS transportation assets, approximately 85 percent of Annual transportation funding will continue to be needed to maintain these assets. Fifteen percent of Annual funding will be needed to maintain unpaved roads and parking areas, transit, trails, and other transportation asset categories (Figure 15).

If the National Park Service is successful in continuing to receive One-Time funding, or if additional appropriations are made available, this will open

**Figure 15:** Baseline Investment Strategy by Asset Type and Category



opportunities for the National Park Service to better meet the goals of the National Transportation Strategy. Under this scenario, a more proactive and coordinated approach will be possible. When transportation needs are funded with One-Time grants or allocations, through partnerships, or special appropriations, the National Park Service will work strategically across programs to update project plans and fill gaps in funding to advance NTS goals.

## Expected Outcomes

Based on forecasted funding, the baseline investment strategy is modeled to meet approximately 95 percent of the funding needs to maintain the existing transportation system in its current condition. This percentage will likely decline in future years as inflation saps the buying power of Annual funding, falling below 85 percent and possibly lower in later years. This means

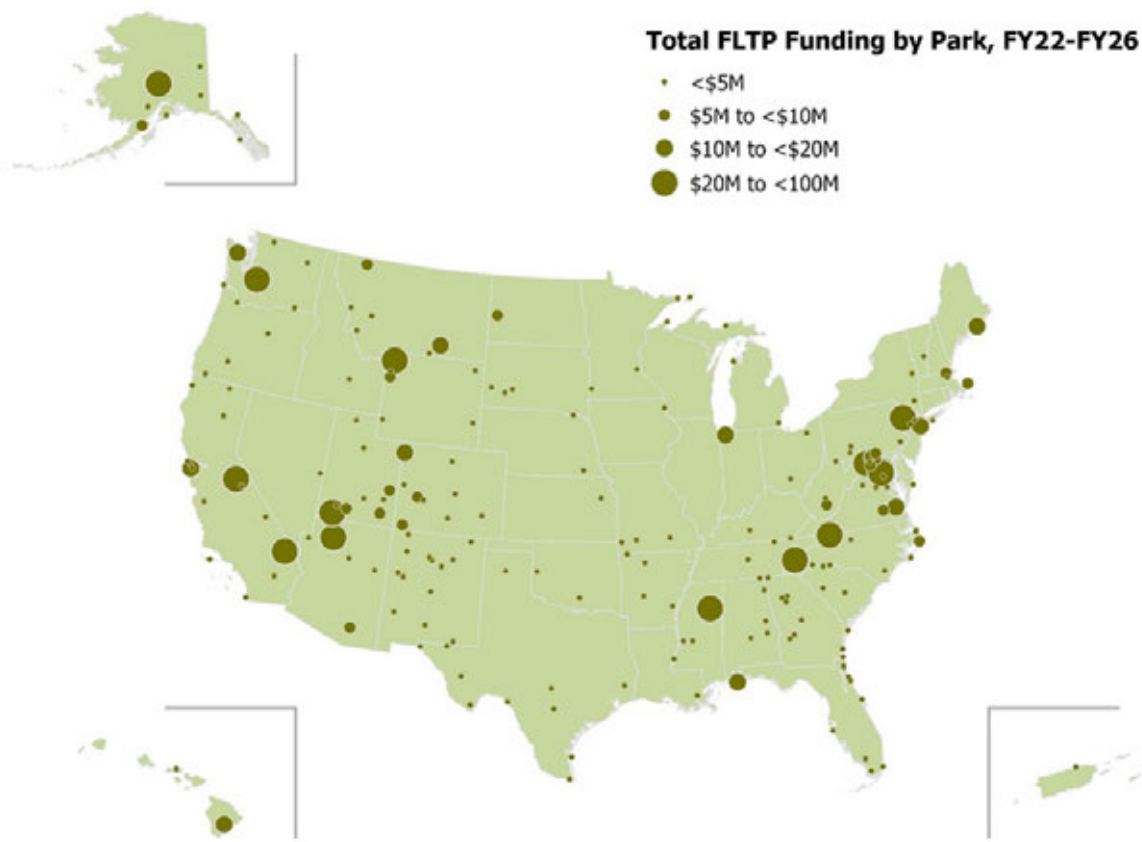
that overall asset condition is projected to decline if limited to Annual funding sources.

As in recent years, the National Park Service will continue to prioritize transportation assets with the biggest impact on visitor access and park operations for funding. Bridges will continue to be the highest priority along with main park roads and transit systems. Parking areas and less-used transportation assets will receive lower priority, but with an overall intent of protecting the public investment in these facilities through a sound asset management approach.

## Planned FLTP Projects

Maintenance and improvements to the NPS transportation network are planned throughout the National Park System. Figure 16 shows how FLTP funds are planned to be invested during the course of the IIJA (FY22-FY26).

**Figure 16:** Planned FLTP Investments FY22-FY26, by park unit



# Opportunities to Strengthen NPS Transportation

The National Park Service is focused on delivering the best transportation program possible for NPS visitors. The IIJA, which authorizes surface transportation programs through FY26, provides the most significant source of NPS transportation funding. Looking to the future, the following principles could help the National Park Service to deliver a world-class transportation system in FY27 and beyond.

## Programs that are Specific to the National Park Service and other FLMAs

The National Park Service estimates that it needs at least \$458 million per year to maintain its transportation assets at current condition, and an additional \$272 million per year to bring assets into average “good” condition. Continuation of the primary surface transportation programs that fund NPS transportation, and addressing the impacts of inflation and obligation limitations on their buying power would put the National Park Service in the best position to maintain the NPS transportation system at the lowest long-term cost to the American taxpayer.

Inflation and obligation limitations have significantly reduced the buying power of the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) in recent years; The current buying power of the NPS FLTP allocation is at its lowest level in at least 20 years. Future FLTP allocations could account for recent high inflation so that the buying power of the program is sustained or increased. The annual obligation limitation reduces the funding that NPS receives from the FLTP by approximately 9.5 percent annually. Exempting the FLTP from the obligation limitation could increase the contract authority available to NPS without increasing the level of authorized appropriations.

The Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) program is a key source of funding

for major projects such as bridge replacements and roadway rehabilitation, which are beyond the capacity of the NPS FLTP. Without dedicated major projects funds, NPS will be unable to fund many of its large capital improvement project needs. The NPS transportation program has identified over 40 major project needs in 18 States, with a total estimated cost of \$2.4 billion.

Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) is an important program which enables NPS to fund repairs to transportation infrastructure damaged by severe weather events. The current ERFO funding level of \$100M/year was last increased in 1980. Quick release of ERFO funds is critical to NPS and has averted major FLTP program disturbances in multiple instances. A less complex and better-defined betterments analysis process would allow ERFO releases to be completed more expeditiously during times of emergency, thus improving response times.

## NPS Eligibility to Participate in a Broader Range of U.S. DOT Programs

If the National Park Service were clearly eligible for all surface transportation formula funds and grants and if NPS could apply for competitive grants without co-sponsorship from state and local governments, NPS could more effectively partner and deliver projects.

In many cases, NPS is not directly eligible to apply for USDOT funding sources, and projects on federal lands are ineligible for certain programs. Removing sponsorship requirements and expanding program eligibility to include projects on federal lands would allow NPS to address substantial transportation needs that are currently not funded. These include road safety enhancements within parks, and major infrastructure betterments to reduce the impact of severe weather on the NPS transportation system.

If NPS were eligible to receive funding from all surface transportation formula programs, and if NPS transit systems were defined as “public transportation” for



Title 49 funding, NPS could partner more effectively with state and local governments to address park access. Furthermore, if NPS were eligible to apply for all competitive grant funding opportunities without co-sponsorship requirements, NPS could reduce the burden of developing applications on these key stakeholders.

### **Funding Efficiencies and Transfer Authorities**

The creation of a Federal Lands Transportation Revolving Fund and clarification of funding transfer authority between FHWA and NPS could speed project delivery.

Although FLTP funds are authorized on a multi-year basis and funded from the Highway Trust Fund, they are subject to annual budgeting processes which create inefficiencies. Unobligated funding must typically be returned at the end of each fiscal year, but continuing resolutions or short-term authorizations significantly delay the timing of funds availability in the next fiscal year, often leaving a very short window of time for NPS to obligate funding to construction contracts.

To address these challenges, a revolving fund could be created, to which FLTP and other funds can be transferred pursuant to agreements between NPS and FHWA. Once transferred, the funds would be considered obligated and remain available without regard to fiscal year limitation. Funds could only be spent on the activities detailed in the agreement to which the funds are obligated.

### **Expansion of NPS Authority to Transfer Jurisdiction to and Cooperatively Manage NPS Transportation Facilities with State and Local Partners**

If the National Park Service had administrative flexibility and mechanisms to transfer maintenance or management of parkways to state and local partners, upon mutual agreement, NPS could seek opportunities to lower long-term costs for parkways that function more like regional transportation assets than park transportation.

NPS owns and operates high traffic volume parkways in the Washington, DC area and select other locations, which represent a significant operational burden for the agency. The DC area parkways account for 42 percent of all vehicle miles traveled on the NPS road system, a majority of which is not related to park visitation. NPS does not have authority to toll or otherwise manage traffic demand on its roads and parkways and parallel routes are often tolled by others. NPS also lacks administrative flexibilities and mechanisms to transfer ownership and operation of these facilities to partner jurisdictions if they wish to assume responsibility for them due to their importance for regional travel not related to park visitation.





***Sequoia & Kings Canyon  
National Parks***

*Credit: Sean Xu - stock.adobe.com*



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# Advance Resource Protection



The National Park Service has been a national and global leader in natural and cultural resource protection for more than a century.

Resource protection will always be a primary goal of the National Park Service, and transportation plays a significant role in those efforts. The National Park Service will work to manage transportation impacts on natural and cultural resources, protecting and preserving resources while also providing efficient transportation systems. The National Park Service will also work to strengthen transportation systems in remote and extreme environments to better withstand severe weather events and other natural hazards.

## Objectives:

1. Manage Transportation Impacts on Natural Resources
2. Protect and Preserve Cultural Resources and American Recreational Heritage
3. Strengthen Transportation Systems to Withstand Severe Weather

## Objective:

# Manage Transportation Impacts on Natural Resources

The National Park Service works to avoid and minimize transportation-related resource impacts whenever possible, prioritizing sustainability in infrastructure investments while also honoring the core mission of protecting and preserving natural resources in harmony with nature.

A substantial portion of the National Park Service's transportation infrastructure was constructed prior to the modern environmental conservation and historic preservation movements, and resource impacts may have been managed differently at that time than they are today. Understanding how transportation infrastructure impacts natural resources is essential, and the National Park Service will continue to work to reduce impacts from both new and legacy infrastructure.

projects. An example is how the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (PRPA), which mandates the management of non-renewable fossils on NPS and other federal lands, is implemented. Since the passing of PRPA, the National Park Service has established an increasingly formal process for assessing paleontological resources in planning for park transportation projects by elevating them to the same level as archaeological resources in the Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) process, therefore providing an essential safeguard.

## Natural Resource Stewardship

With more than 84 million acres of land and water in its stewardship, National Park Service lands encompass a diverse range of ecosystems and habitats. From air pollutants emitted by tailpipes to stormwater runoff and channelization caused by impervious surfaces, transportation systems directly and indirectly impact ecosystems and other natural resources in a variety of ways. The National Park Service actively considers these and other transportation impacts and strives to balance resource protection and visitor access goals.

The National Park Service provides scientific, technical, and administrative support to NPS units systemwide. Natural resources are not always visible to the human eye, and transportation assets could potentially harm those resources if not maintained properly. When the National Park Service engages in transportation projects, it uses management policies to protect existing resources. These policies are derived from the National Environmental Policy Act and other planning activities involving park construction and transportation

# Strategies

## Manage Impacts on Terrestrial and Aquatic

**Species:** The National Park Service will improve its understanding and prioritize reduction of transportation impacts on terrestrial and aquatic species in NPS units by using habitat maps, species movement patterns, established wildlife corridors, threatened and endangered species “take” information, carcass data, and crash report data.

**Prioritize Context-Sensitive Design:** The National Park Service will prioritize context-sensitive design to incorporate technologies such as quieter pavement, permeable paving, and bioswales.

**Design Roads for Lower Operating Speeds:** The National Park Service will design roads for relatively lower operating speeds. A design speed of 25 mph should be the goal, which will likely

lessen transportation impacts on cultural and natural resources.

**Protect Natural Night Lighting Environment:** The National Park Service will consider the need for lighting on new transportation projects more critically and when possible, use streetlights that have controls such as timers, dimmers, and are lower in intensity, and warmer in color (less than 3,000 Kelvin). Remove or retrofit existing lighting that deteriorates the natural night environment in order to reduce impacts on wildlife and improve visitor experience.

**Emphasize Broader Planning Tools:** The National Park Service will emphasize comprehensive planning processes that help park managers better understand the potential impacts of an entire suite of transportation related actions on park resources, rather than case-by-case decisions for portions of the transportation system.



## Examples

### Death Valley Quieter Pavement

[A study in Death Valley National Park](#) in southeastern California examined alternative surface pavement treatment types with the goal of mitigating roadway noise. For roads with speed limits over 45 mph, use of alternative pavement surfaces could result in significantly less human and wildlife perception of traffic noise.

*Credit: blewulis - stock.adobe.com*



### Big Cypress National Preserve Culvert Design

Through stakeholder engagement, Big Cypress National Preserve, located adjacent to the Everglades National Park in southern Florida, has developed a hydrologic restoration management plan, enabling the natural topography to dictate water flow in the swamp landscape. This includes installing plugs and flow management through culverts to improve hydrology, as demonstrated on [Turner River Road](#).



# Objective: Protect and Preserve Cultural Resources and American Recreational Heritage

## Cultural Resource Stewardship

The National Park Service works to protect significant cultural resources by preserving the history of this land, the content within, and all associated people. Under the Cultural Resource Management Guideline, also known as [Director's Order 28](#), the National Park Service defines cultural resources as archaeological resources, cultural landscapes, culturally significant structures, museum objects, and ethnographic resources.

Cultural resources can be affected by transportation projects when they interfere with historic viewsheds or cultural landscapes, or when construction activities have the potential to cause adverse effects to cultural resources. However, many NPS transportation assets are themselves cultural resources for park visitors to enjoy since they are nationally significant and retain integrity, meaning their value is accurately reflected through their material attributes. Examples include the Blue Ridge Parkway, the longest road planned as a single unit in the United States; the Edmund Pettus Bridge, part of the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail and the site of a turning point in the American Civil Rights Movement; and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, a preservation of the nation's early transportation history.

Transportation systems in park units both provide access to cultural landscapes and can be contributing features of the cultural landscapes themselves, comprising important aspects of American recreational heritage. Most park units contain cultural landscapes, so it is essential that the National Park Service continues to provide an appropriate level of public accessibility to those historically significant spaces. When transportation assets are, of themselves, listed or eligible for listing in the National Register, or contributing features within a landscape or a district, any maintenance or design plans shall be informed by the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. These standards will help ensure the preservation of the integrity of the resources while meeting modern expectations for safety and overall achievement of the NPS transportation goals.

Cultural resources often show up in the forms of historical assets, as displayed in [Table 5](#). Many cultural resources are also listed in or eligible for listing in the [National Register of Historic Places](#) and are therefore considered "historic," which indicates the National Park Service's compliance with the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) and related regulations and policies into agency planning. The National Park Service also works with stakeholders to avoid, minimize, and mitigate effects to those resources, which comprise approximately 20 percent of the NPS transportation asset portfolio.

Several cultural resource types both affect, and are affected by, the NPS transportation system. These [cultural resource types](#) include ethnographic resources, archeological resources, historic and prehistoric structures, cultural landscapes, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Sites, some of which are also listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

# Strategies

**Conduct Cultural Resource Assessments:** The National Park Service will conduct cultural resource assessments prior to transportation construction projects in sensitive areas.

**Preserve Transportation Assets that are Cultural Resources:** The National Park Service will balance preservation of transportation assets that are cultural resources with other needs such as safety issues.

**Continue to Work with Tribal Governments:** The National Park Service will continue to engage and consult with Tribal governments to preserve prehistoric and historic resources that help tell the story of indigenous communities.

**Table 5: 2022 NPS Historic Transportation Asset Summary Table**

Annually, Facility Management Software System (FMSS) data is reported through the U.S. Department of the Interior to the government-wide Federal Real Property Profile Management System (FRPP MS), which includes these categories: (1) National Historic Landmarks (NHL), (2) National Register (NR) Listed, (3) National Register Eligible, (4) Non-Contributing Element of a NHL/NR Listed Historic District, (5) Not Evaluated, (6) Not Historic Note that the majority of these resources have not yet been evaluated for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, which is accomplished via [this process](#).

FMSS Data is reported by federal real property historic status, which includes four resource tiers: (1) National Historic Landmarks (NHL), (2) National Register Listed (NRL), (3) National Register Eligible, and (4) contributing to NHL or NRL asset.

Category	FRP Historic Status
Road	1,488
Parking Area	967
Road Bridges and Tunnels	966
Trail	976
Trail Bridges and Tunnels	298
Transit System Assets	676
Total	5,371



## Examples

### Rehabilitation of Carriage Roads at Acadia National Park

Over several years, the National Park Service rehabilitated the 45-mile network of historic carriage roads at Acadia National Park on the coast of Maine, dating back to the early 20th Century. Improvements to the carriage road network that successfully preserved their culturally significant features ensure cultural and transportation value to visitors, who use the paths to access the interior of Mount Desert Island on foot, bicycle, horse carriage, or on horseback.



### Rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park

In 2020, the National Park Service completed a more than \$160 million rehabilitation of Glacier National Park's Going-to-the-Sun Road, which provides spectacular views of the continental divide. [Designed in 1918, it is among the earliest examples of context-sensitive roadway design.](#) Rehab work began in 2007 and included retaining walls, arches, bridges, tunnels, guard walls, and removable guardrails, among other improvements. Aside from adding new transit stops, project engineers prioritized preservation of the road's historical character, including matching original materials.

*Credit: vermontalm - stock.adobe.com*

## **Objective:**

# **Strengthen Transportation Systems to Withstand Severe Weather**

Many NPS units are located in vulnerable locations such as coastal areas, river valleys, islands, deserts, and mountains. Providing access to unique and dramatic natural settings is a hallmark of the National Park System. However, many of the most compelling locations are also subject to extreme weather conditions and other natural hazards such as heavy precipitation, flooding, extreme heat, wildfires, strong storms, and landslides.

NPS transportation systems often experience damage from extreme weather events. The FHWA Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) program funded more than \$180 million in NPS emergency restoration projects in FY16-22. To better prepare for these impacts, the National Park Service is working to address natural hazards vulnerabilities in transportation projects throughout the development process including routine maintenance, recapitalization, and when new facilities are designed.

Roads, bridges, visitor centers, historic structures, and other park facilities are of particular concern, as they are often fixed in place, provide important services, and represent significant investments. Identifying and addressing the most urgent risks to critical assets is a priority. The National Park Service has invested in vulnerability assessments in recent years but there is much work to be done to fully understand the scope and scale of potential risks to NPS transportation infrastructure, and to identify cost-effective ways to address them.

# Strategies

**Create Long-Term Strategies for at-Risk Infrastructure:** The National Park Service will identify at-risk transportation infrastructure and create long-term strategies to address them. The National Park Service will also update access plans to include strategies to address risks for park units with identified transportation infrastructure vulnerabilities.

**Strengthen Infrastructure:** The National Park Service will collect and share knowledge of effective strategies to strengthen infrastructure and reduce risks in transportation projects.

**Protect Infrastructure from Flooding:** The National Park Service will identify and pursue opportunities to reduce infrastructure risk from flooding while also restoring or improving hydrologic conditions.

**Manage Unstable Slopes:** The National Park Service will identify transportation corridors that are at-risk of damage from unstable slopes and effective strategies to manage these risks.



Beach Erosion at Cape Cod National Seashore. Credit: AlienCat - stock.adobe.com



## Examples

### Flood Recovery at Yellowstone National Park

In June 2022, Yellowstone National Park experienced the [worst flood in the history of the park](#). Extraordinarily heavy precipitation combined with rapid snowmelt resulted in riverine flooding that damaged several roads, bridges, and trails, in addition to other critical infrastructure. In partnership with FHWA, the National Park Service responded with emergency repairs that restored access to the park within four months, but long-term recovery will take years.



### Gulf Islands National Seashore Ferry System

The Gulf Islands National Seashore in Florida utilizes a [ferry system](#) to transport visitors from the city of Pensacola to Fort Pickens as a transportation alternative. The ferry system was put in place as a result of weather-related coastal erosion along the roadway that connects the automobile bridge to the fort.





*Acadia National Park*





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# Enhance Visitor Experience and Connect Gateway Communities



The National Park Service provides access for hundreds of millions of visits every year and is committed to ensuring future visitors experience a safe, efficient, and innovative transportation system when visiting one of the nation's many national parks. The National Park Service is also committed to being a good neighbor to surrounding communities.

This chapter outlines objectives for supporting visitors and ensuring visitors' needs are understood and addressed. Barriers to visitation, especially for residents of gateway communities, is of particular concern. Gaining a better understanding of visitation barriers will lead to appropriate actions to address them. Understanding needs and barriers and addressing those issues will enable the National Park Service to strategically enhance safety, expand access, and strengthen community connections for current visitors and non-visitors alike.

## Objectives:

1. Improve NPS Transportation System Safety
2. Improve Connections to Neighboring Communities
3. Create an Accessible and Welcoming Transportation System
4. Strategically Enhance Transportation Systems to Address Visitor Needs
5. Prepare for the Future of Transportation

# Objective:

## Improve NPS Transportation System Safety

Motor vehicle crashes are the second leading cause of unintentional deaths in NPS units. The NPS [Servicewide Mortality Dashboard](#) identified 163 deaths in motor vehicle crashes on roads within NPS units from 2014 – 2016 (Figure 17).<sup>1</sup> On average, one person dies in a motor vehicle crash every week on NPS roadways.<sup>2</sup> In line with sentiments in U.S. DOT’s [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) that “zero is the only acceptable number of deaths and serious injuries on our roadways,” NPS Management Policies 2006 and NPS Director’s Order 50C address visitor safety in stating that the NPS “strives to protect human life and provide for injury-free visits” and “It is the intent of the National Park Service that all visitors have an injury-free park experience” respectively.

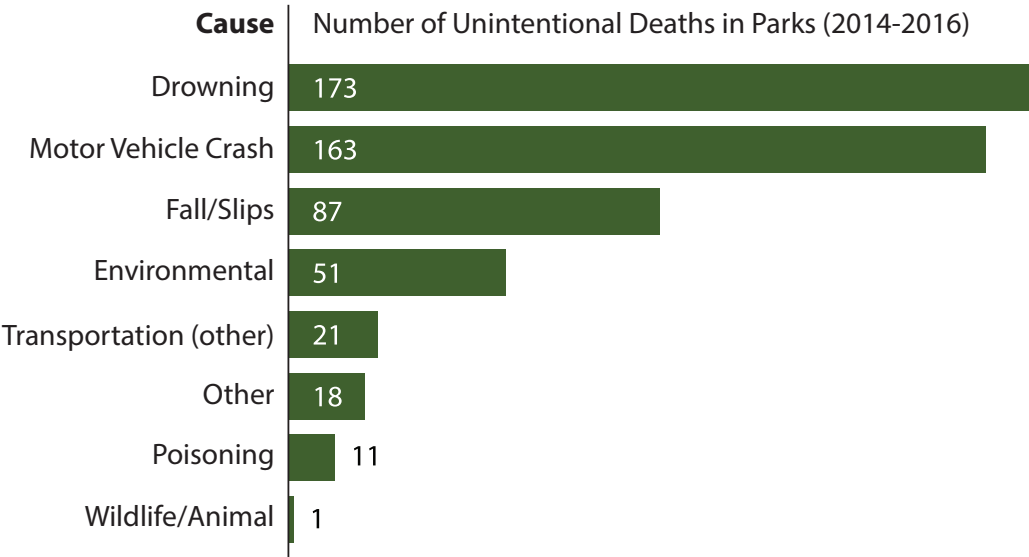
Opportunities exist to improve roadway safety using the 4 Es: Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Response strategies, which should be defined during the roadway planning, design construction, operation, and maintenance phases of a transportation project. 4E strategies should be developed by multidisciplinary teams, be data driven to target high priority causal factors and crash locations, and integrate context sensitive solutions to align with natural and cultural resource values. Strategies from all 4-E’s should be implemented to reduce crashes at high priority locations across parks.



A road winds through Yosemite National Park. Credit: Tom Nevesely - stock.adobe.com

**Figure 17:** Causes of Unintentional Deaths in National Parks (2014-2016)

Source: NPS Servicewide Mortality Dashboard



1 This number excludes on-duty NPS staff, volunteers, contractors, and concessioners.  
 2 NPS Mortality Dashboard Key Statistics CY2014 - CY2016: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1336/upload/CY14-CY16-Mortality-Dashboard-Key-Statistics.pdf>

An enjoyable visitor experience that is free from transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries and protects NPS natural and cultural resources requires collaboration between stakeholders, internal and external to the National Park Service, with expertise in natural resources, cultural resources, and the 4Es.

The NPS Transportation Safety Team ensures continued involvement and collaboration within the National Park Service and with U.S. DOT. Annual regional transportation safety briefings highlight recent analyses, completed projects, emerging technologies, and low-cost safety improvements, among other information. NPS regions reference these resources when making programming and project development decisions.

## Strategies

**Proactively Identify Opportunities to Incorporate Safety:** Planning tools and strategies, which incorporate risk management approaches such as [Road Safety Audits](#), Park Road Safety Plans, and Safety Assessments, are proactive and multidisciplinary data driven safety decision-making tools to identify opportunities to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

**Implement a Context Sensitive Approach to Safety:** A context sensitive approach to safety incorporates natural and cultural resources needs (night skies, terrestrial and aquatic organisms, native plants, natural soundscapes, archaeological resources, historic and prehistoric structures, cultural landscapes, etc.), into the safety decision making process to minimize impacts. Where substantial engineering strategies may impact natural and cultural resources, combinations of behavioral safety strategies alongside less impactful engineering strategies can together contribute to reducing risk of severe crashes.

**Pursue Multidisciplinary Safety Partnerships and Strategies:** Partnerships focused on planning and operations, education, enforcement, and emergency services will create collaborative opportunities and further NPS interests with external partners and help parks, and local, regional, and Tribal partners identify and implement effective safety strategies.



The 4-E's of roadway safety include considerations for engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response strategies. Source: NPS Transportation Safety Factsheet



### **Develop a Transportation Safety Management**

**Toolkit for NPS Parks and Regions:** The National Park Service is developing a Transportation Safety Management Toolkit, comparable to the NPS Congestion Management Toolkit, as a multidisciplinary resource to include guidance, examples, and templates of the technical assistance available to NPS units and regions. Some additional tools to be developed include Park Road Safety Action Plans and Safety Implementation Plans.

### **Develop Policies and Programs to Implement**

**Proven Safety Countermeasures:** The National Park Service will develop and implement policies, programs, and projects that improve safety for all road users. These road safety approaches will seek to create safe, connected, and integrated park and community transportation systems.



## **Examples**

### **Coordinated Education and Enforcement at Mojave National Preserve**

Carrying out recommendations from a multidisciplinary transportation safety implementation plan, Mojave National Preserve coordinated short-term [education](#) and [enforcement](#) strategies, in an attention-grabbing “Drive Like A Tortoise” campaign. The campaign sought to reduce fatalities and serious injuries associated with excessive speed and roadway departure while educating the public about the associated risks for the iconic, charismatic, and federally protected desert tortoise.



### **Context Sensitive Safety Design at George Washington Memorial Parkway**

The George Washington memorial Parkway implemented a context sensitive, multidisciplinary approach to address roadway departure crashes in [the plan](#) for the rehabilitation of the north section of the parkway. Objectively based on a Wall Safety Risk Assessment, a Visual Resource Inventory and Assessment, and a Cultural Landscape Inventory report, the plan reduces the likelihood and severity of crashes when a vehicle leaves the roadway, while preserving the historical stone walls and other natural and cultural resources along the parkway.

## Objective: Improve Connections to Neighboring Communities

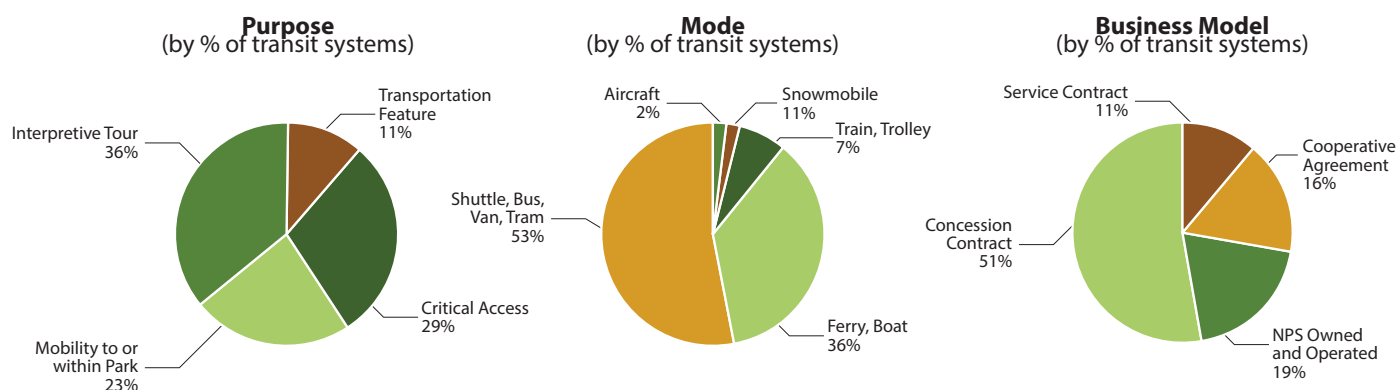
NPS transportation systems do not begin and end at park boundaries; they connect to, rely on, and integrate with state and local transportation systems to provide visitor access. Similarly, a visitor's transportation experience often begins at home with trip planning. The National Park Service is working to better understand the ways that an integrated, regional transportation network that connects across park boundaries benefits visitors and local stakeholders alike. Improving connections to neighboring communities involves working cooperatively with community stakeholders, state DOTs, transit authorities, non-profit organizations, and Tribal Nations. Creating world-class transportation systems requires recognizing these systems' physical and non-physical connections which create important links to natural, cultural, and historic resources.



A shuttle bus at Zion National Park.

NPS transportation systems transcend unit boundaries and make vital connections in and outside of parks. Transit is an especially prominent example of such a network. There are nearly [100 NPS transit systems serving close to 60 parks](#), providing more than 30 million annual passenger boardings. Many of these systems are not operated by the National Park Service but by service providers, local transit agencies, or concessioners through cooperative agreements or contracts. In urban and suburban settings, bicycle and pedestrian trails serve as another means to connect NPS units with local communities. The

**Figure 18:** NPS Transit Systems by Purpose, Mode, and Business Model ([NTI](#), 2)



rich variety of types and contexts of transportation systems illustrates the necessity for the National Park Service to work alongside a range of stakeholders to support these systems and enhance visitor and community access (Figure 18).

When integrated with local and regional transportation networks, NPS transportation systems enhance quality of life and provide economic benefits to neighboring communities. However, visitation demands can also impose negative impacts on local communities. NPS units engage with partners to understand these impacts and find solutions through integrated planning, including actively engaging with communities to address negative impacts. Engaging with neighboring communities provides opportunities for the National Park Service to learn from experts on innovative approaches and solve problems together. In the best cases, these conversations lead to ongoing relationships where park staff strategically work with community partners to minimize negative impacts and provide the best traveling experience, inside, and outside of the park.

The National Park Service has a valuable opportunity to expand access to parks through its transportation system. Increasing bus routes, expanding shuttle fleets, strengthening partnerships, supporting close-to-home recreation opportunities, and working with local and state partners to improve connectivity will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to experience the parks in their own backyard and around the country.

## Strategies

**Provide and Promote Transportation Options:** The National Park Service will continue to emphasize transit and trail connections to neighboring communities to protect park resources, reduce congestion, and give visitors greater choice in how they access and experience parks.

**Work with Partners on Funding Opportunities:** The National Park Service will work with state and local partners to pursue grants, donations, and other available funding opportunities that improve connections to neighboring communities and reduce negative impacts of visitation.

**Agency Coordination in Transportation Planning and Programming:** FHWA and the National Park Service will continue to improve the [coordination of NPS transportation planning with state and local agencies](#) in a way that considers the situation of park units within larger community contexts, recognizes the unique needs and behaviors of different traveler segments, and creates opportunities for all parties to better understand transportation challenges that park units and neighboring communities face, and work together to address them.

**Collaborate with Local Partners to Pilot Information on Transportation Options:** The National Park Service will collaborate with state and local governments to pilot approaches that will provide visitors with important transportation information, such as parking lot status, bus arrival estimates, and road closures, including potential pilots related to improving the [NPS app](#) and providing data services that common trip planning applications can incorporate.

## Improve Guidance for Partnering with Local and State Transportation

**Planning Entities:** The National Park Service will continue to improve and develop clear guidance, tools, resources, and education for NPS units on engaging with community stakeholders on transportation planning efforts.



## Examples

### Pullman National Historical Park Transportation and Access Plan

The [Pullman National Historical Park Transportation and Access Plan](#) emphasizes access to transit, walking, and bicycling to the park from surrounding neighborhoods. The plan was made possible by partnering with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the National Parks Conservation Association, the City of Chicago, and many others. Local residents and stakeholder groups were engaged throughout the planning process to ensure their perspectives on appropriate access for this new NPS unit were incorporated.

*Credit: Positioning Pullman*



### Acadia Island Explorer Shuttle Bus

The [Island Explorer](#) Shuttle Bus at Acadia National Park was implemented in response to increasing congestion at the park and in nearby towns. The Island Explorer is operated by local transportation service Downeast Transportation and made possible by a partnership between the park, seven local communities, the state of Maine, philanthropic partners, commercial sponsors, and visitor fees and donations. Since starting operations in 1999, the system has expanded multiple times, and the Island Explorer has provided more than [7.7 million trips](#) to visitors and local residents alike.

**Objective:**  
**Create an Accessible and Welcoming Transportation System**

Recognizing the needs of visitors is key to creating a welcoming and secure environment. For example, not all visitors drive or own a personal vehicle, and some may have disabilities that limit the places they can safely access.

According to data from the [2018 NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public](#), which documents the relative attitudes of both visitors and non-visitors of national parks, a lack of affordable transportation options is a barrier that may limit park access (Table 6). A perception that national parks are not accessible to people with disabilities is another commonly-cited barrier.

The National Park Service seeks to provide a transportation system that encourages and supports all Americans in being able to access an enjoy national parks. This includes complying with the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and adopting the Access Board’s Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG).

**Table 6:** Percent strongly agreeing with reasons for not visiting, non-visitors only, comparisons across CSAP1, CSAP2, CSAP3

Source: NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, 2018

Reason	CSAP1	CSAP 2	CSAP 3
Takes too long to get there	34%	22%	34%
Too crowded	13%	9%	5%
Lack of information about what to do there	11%	12%	17%
Entrance fees too high	10%	10%	12%
Not accessible to the physically disabled	5%	5%	12%
NPS units not safe	2%	4%	4%



## Strategies

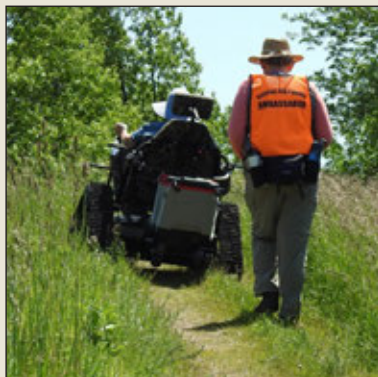
### **Improve Visitor Information on Transportation**

**System Accessibility:** The National Park Service will improve the information available to visitors on the accessibility of transportation systems, especially for trails.

### **Ensure Transit and Trail Systems are Accessible and**

**Connect to Accessible Destinations:** The National Park Service will create transit and trail systems that are linked and designed to provide multimodal, accessible visits.

**Improve Understanding of Barriers:** The National Park Service will continue to conduct research and outreach to visitors and non-visitors to better understand barriers to accessing units of the national park system. Transit and trail systems will implement context-sensitive environmental design elements to address accessibility, safety, and security concerns.



## Examples

### **Accessible Track Chairs at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore**

The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore [track chair](#) is a first-of-its-kind accessibility program for the National Park Service. Track chairs can be reserved for track chair hikes for persons with disabilities to visit park areas that are inaccessible by regular wheelchairs. The program is made possible by a partnership between the park unit and the Friends of Sleeping Bear group.

*Credit: Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes*



### **Accessible Link to Transit at Muir Beach**

Located at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, an accessible multiuse path links a new [Muir Woods Shuttle](#) stop to Muir Beach. The shuttle system and path are both accessible. The multiuse path serves bicyclists and pedestrians and is designed with universal access standards to facilitate use by persons with disabilities.

*Credit: Go Muir Woods*

## Objective:

# Strategically Enhance Transportation Systems to Address Visitor Needs

Over the last several years, NPS visitation has reached new heights. The National Park System has also grown, with the designation of several new units since 2017. Despite this growth, many barriers to visitation remain. Funding for NPS transportation is limited, but with collaborative partnerships and an emphasis on understanding visitor needs, the NPS transportation system can be strategically expanded to address gaps and provide a range of affordable transportation options.

Hundreds of millions of people visit NPS units each year. As visitation numbers continue to rise, existing park infrastructure can be overwhelmed. Unfortunately, many NPS visitors experience congestion or crowding in some of the most popular areas. Some visitors engage in unsafe or damaging behaviors when they find areas at capacity, such as unintentional trail widening or parking on road shoulders that are not wide enough, harming threatened and endangered species and limiting emergency vehicle access.

Balancing transportation systems with visitation demand is not always straightforward; expanding roads and parking lots is not always financially and operationally feasible, or aligned with the NPS mission to protect and preserve natural and cultural resources. In some cases, expanding the NPS transportation system may be needed to enhance visitor experience, improve safety, and protect resources.

Visitors access the majority of NPS units via a personal motor vehicle.<sup>3</sup> However, some visitors may not be able to drive due to age, disability, cost, or lack of a valid license. In the 2018 NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, more than one-third of non-visitor respondents cited lack of good transportation options as a barrier to accessing NPS units (Figure 19).

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3 Approximately [8.5% of U.S. households do not own a vehicle](#). The [average U.S. household spends](#) nearly \$10,000 per year on transportation, with personal vehicles accounting for almost 90% of these costs.

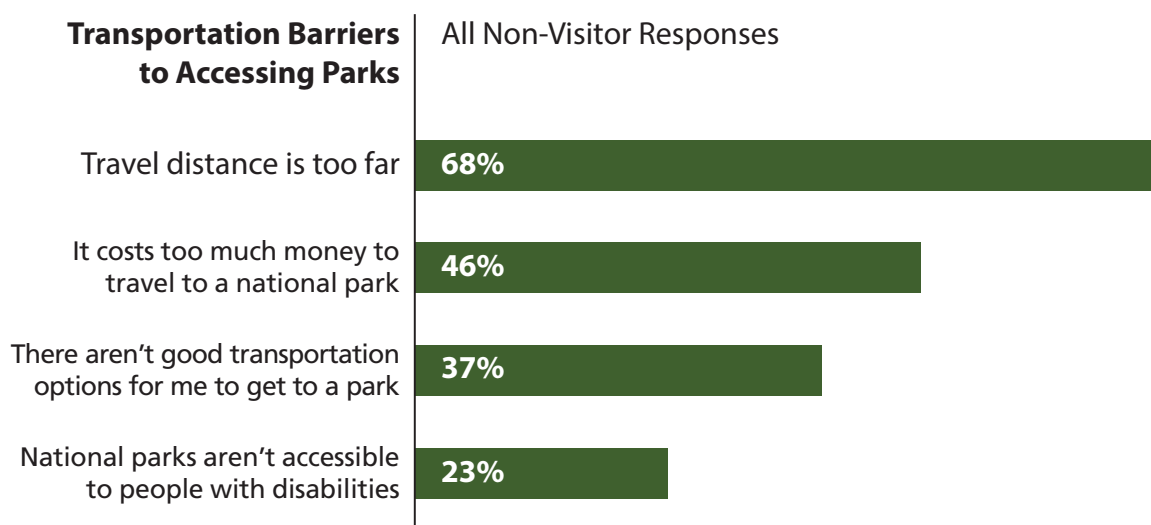
The National Park Service is seeking to better understand where existing transportation options are lacking for visitors and providing alternative transportation options when possible. For example, developing front country trails may be effective in some locations to create new ways to access NPS units while promoting resource protection and supporting economic development. Partnering with local public transportation systems has also proven to be successful in others. Coordinating integrated transportation systems with neighboring communities so that visitors have options for travel both to and within park boundaries is a challenge, but one that may enhance transportation options for all users.

Finally, the National Park Service seeks to be a good neighbor and work effectively alongside other partners in a community. Integrated planning and implementation activities between the National Park Service, local, and state partners requires being sensitive to the concerns and transportation needs and trends of local communities, and understanding the impacts that transportation improvement projects could have on these communities.

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## Figure 19: Transportation-Related Barriers to Accessing NPS Units - Non-Visitors

Source: NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, 2018



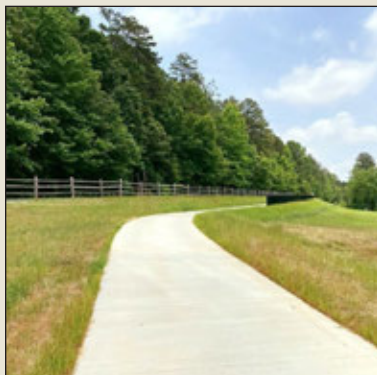
# Strategies

**Identify Opportunities to Expand Public Transit and Trails Connections to NPS Units:** The NPS Transportation Program will evaluate potential new or expanded transit services and trails connecting NPS units to gateway communities, helping urban and rural parks better understand and address transportation gaps.

**Expand Affordable Transportation Options:** The National Park Service will expand affordable access to parks. This may include agreements or partnerships with transportation providers to charge reduced rates for local residents and families.

**Assist Local Communities in Planning Connections to Parks:** NPS park units will assist local communities in planning for and connecting communities to parks.

**Collaborate with Recreational, Tourism, and Community Partners to Address Access Challenges:** The National Park Service will collaborate with recreational, tourism, and community partners to identify and address transportation-related barriers that make travel to parks unaffordable or inaccessible for some visitors.



## Examples

### Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park Multiuse Trail

A 1.69-mile-long [multiuse trail](#) at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park creates alternative transportation access to, from, and within the park to enhance visitor experience and improve commuting options in the region, as it links to the larger regional trail network. A park road restriped to accommodate pedestrians and bus service offers additional transportation options.



### The National Mall and Memorial Parks Multimodal Improvements Plan

The [National Mall and Memorial Parks Multimodal Strategic Plan](#) proposes design recommendations for selected NPS and District of Columbia roadways to improve safety. [Hains Point](#) is one location that has been improved to create safer access to the park for visitors and local residents, with several others proposed.

## Objective:

# Prepare for the Future of Transportation

The transportation industry is evolving rapidly, aided by advancements in mobile communications, new shared mobility business models, and vehicle automation. These emerging mobility trends present opportunities and challenges for the National Park Service and its resources. Keeping pace with the changing transportation landscape will be necessary to ensure the future of transportation in parks remains safe, accessible, and meets visitor needs. As an active participant in developing and testing new mobility technologies and services through pilot projects, partnerships, and information sharing, the National Park Service can help parks enhance visitor experience and connect gateway communities by expanding transportation options, protecting natural and cultural resources, and developing a more efficient and nimble transportation system.

DOI and DOT have been working together for years to proactively address emerging transportation trends and innovations. Through this partnership, the National Park Service showcases new transportation innovations to the public with the potential to enhance access, expand transportation options, and improve the visitor experience. Emerging technologies and innovations may be key to finding solutions to these areas of emphasis.



Autonomous Shuttle Bus Demonstrated at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in 2024.  
Credit: Emily Maciejak/USDOT Volpe Center



Transit and emerging mobility technologies are changing the transportation expectations of visitors. The National Park Service has an opportunity to pilot, regulate, and promote appropriate new technologies to meet the needs and expectations of visitors for available mobility services. Through planning for potential emerging mobility initiatives, the National Park Service can further the NPS emphasis to provide a world-class transportation experience for visitors.

While new technologies may expand affordable and accessible transportation options, there are several challenges. First, many emerging mobility services are provided by private-sector companies. Partnering with these companies is necessary to find appropriate park solutions but could result in the National Park Service reevaluating existing protocols, like Commercial Use Authorizations. Second, many services rely on cellular data service and GPS, which are not available in all NPS park units. Adding new technologies and services can also compete with other park priorities for funding and staff support. As emerging mobility technologies and their applicability to parks becomes clearer, the National Park Service will work to implement them in ways that complement the world-class visitor experience that NPS visitors expect.



A parking lot at Yosemite National Park begins to fill up.

# Strategies

**Continue Emerging Mobility Initiative:** The National Park Service will continue to pilot new transportation technologies that include, but are not limited to, [automated shuttle demonstrations](#), micromobility and ridehailing partnerships, and technologies that provide real-time and predictive transportation information to visitors.

**Understand Visitor Travel Patterns to Inform Transportation Planning and Management:** The National Park Service will pursue partnerships to better understand visitor travel patterns to inform park planning and operations.

**Improve Information on Road Closures, Work Zones, and Incidents:** To help travelers anticipate and avoid NPS roads closed or impacted by construction, extreme weather, local events, or other roadway disruptions, the

National Park Service will improve how information about these issues are communicated, including working with navigation apps and services that many visitors rely on, including by expanding the use of the NPS roadevents API.

**Improve and Expand Trip Planning Tools:** The National Park Service will explore integrating traveler information into [NPS digital products](#) and coordinate with navigation apps and services commonly used by the public, to display accurate information and empower visitors to make more informed travel choices.

**Evaluate Next Generation Automated Transit Systems:** The National Park Service will continue to monitor and explore next generation automated driving technologies which may enhance the visitor experience, lower long-term operating costs, or improve accessibility, where appropriate.



## Examples

### Parking Space Availability Tracking at Indiana Dunes National Park

Parks often have more visitation demand than available parking spaces during peak seasons. To help the public understand parking availability prior to arriving, and to help them make informed transportation decisions, [Indiana Dunes National Park installed sensors that monitor parking lot usage](#).



### Automated Shuttle Pilots at Yellowstone National Park, Wright Brothers National Memorial, and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

The National Park Service [conducted automated shuttle pilots](#) in 2021 at two units: Yellowstone National Park and Wright Brothers National Memorial, and at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in 2024. These pilots provided the National Park Service and industry with information about how automated shuttles perform in park settings and helped evaluate the infrastructure requirements, costs, and benefits of integrating automated shuttles into parks.

*Credit: MelissaMN - stock.adobe.com*





***New River Gorge National  
Park & Preserve***

*Credit: steheap - stock.adobe.com*

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# Reinvest in the System and Make Legacy Investments



To provide visitors with access to enjoy all the parks have to offer, the National Park Service maintains an extensive transportation system. With 6,600 miles of paved roads, 7,300 miles of unpaved roads, 1,800 road bridges and tunnels, 6,300 paved parking areas, 1,000 miles of transportation trails, 200 transportation trail bridges and tunnels, and 100 transit systems, the NPS transportation system is similar in scope and scale to a small state DOT. With limited maintenance staff and a constrained budget, the National Park Service must strategically approach transportation investments.

The National Park Service utilizes industry-standard processes for asset management, with a focus on preserving assets, realizing their full useful lifespan, and allocating funds to the most mission-critical assets, maximizing return on investment. To make major investments, rehabilitation, or replacements that require large funding amounts, the National Park Service seeks grants and partnerships for projects that outpace annual funding it typically receives.

Bridges are a particular focus. Several large and complex bridges, such as the Tennessee River Bridge on the Natchez Trace Parkway, Colonial Parkway bridges, and the cantilevered section of the Clara Barton Parkway need major rehabilitation or replacement. Developing funding plans for these major projects is a high priority.

## Objectives:

1. Leverage Grants for Major Projects
2. Maintain Condition of Existing Assets
3. Prioritize Preventive Maintenance and Preservation to Maximize Return on Investment



## Objective:

# Leverage Grants for Major Projects

Over the past decade, changes in federal surface transportation legislation have increasingly emphasized the role of competitive grants in funding transportation capital investments for local, regional, and state governments, as well as FLMAs. NPS annual transportation funding is needed to maintain the existing transportation system and is insufficient to finance system expansion or other major projects, such as large bridge replacements or transit fleet modernization. Therefore, competitive grants and partnerships are increasingly necessary to fund major NPS transportation projects.

By increasing the available funding for many competitive and formula grant programs, and expanding NPS eligibility for some programs, the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\) of 2021](#) created unprecedented funding opportunities for the National Park Service to make legacy investments in its transportation system. The National Park Service will continue to apply for grant funding for large and complex projects and will invest in integrated transportation planning with local and state partners to build support for competitive applications.

Given the high level of engagement needed to develop grant application packages, the National Park Service prioritizes the highest-value programs and projects, to work with partners to leverage funding opportunities for transportation priorities.

NPS Parks and Regions identified more than 350 candidate projects for the Washington Support Office to review. These candidate projects align with NTS goal areas and are beyond the capacity of annual transportation programs to address. The most common project types include road, bridge, transit fleet or vessel replacement, and strengthening infrastructure to address natural hazards risks. From those submissions, the National Park Service identified priority projects across regions and goal areas for which to pursue grant applications.



# Strategies

**Pursue Grant and Partnership Opportunities in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act:** The National Park Service will continue to prioritize the highest-value projects and programs to fund projects beyond the capacity of annual funding to address.

**Prioritize Planning and Compliance to Position Projects to Compete for Grants:** The National Park Service will conduct integrated transportation planning activities at the park unit scale, to identify

and scope projects, develop cost estimates, conduct feasibility studies, and complete compliance and engagement activities.

**Work with Partners to Develop Grant Applications That Address Shared Needs and Goals:** The National Park Service will continue to collaborate with state, local, and philanthropic partners to develop grant applications that address shared transportation priorities, expand the number of grants they are eligible for, and increase the competitiveness of those applications.



## Examples

### Foothills Parkway Completion in Great Smoky Mountains National Park

In 2018, the National Park Service, in collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Transportation and FHWA [completed a “missing link” in the western section of the Foothills Parkway](#). This project opened 16 miles of parkway and provided a 33-mile continuous visitor experience through the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, offering scenic views and expanding travel access. The capstone project cost \$32 million, including a \$10 million Federal grant and \$15 million from the State of Tennessee.

*Credit: Lane Construction*



### Anacostia Riverwalk Trail

The National Park Service partnered with the D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT) to create the Anacostia River Trail. By creating and maintaining the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, the National Park Service has improved multimodal access to Anacostia Park and areas in our nation’s capital. The trail reduces traffic congestion around the site and provides active transportation options for local visitors and residents. Funding sources have included [a \\$10 million TIGER grant](#) (2012), [a \\$6.5 million RAISE Grant](#) (2023) and \$7.7 million in FLAP grants (2013 and 2022), in addition to a [\\$50 million investment by DDOT](#).

## Objective: Maintain Condition of Existing Assets

Maintaining the condition of existing transportation assets is central to supporting a financially sustainable transportation system and ensuring a safe and quality visitor experience. The National Park Service will strategically prioritize assets for investments to reduce long-term maintenance costs and maximize asset lifespans (Figure 20). When possible, it is also important to decommission lower priority assets to remove maintenance liabilities when transportation assets no longer serve an important function, are unsustainable due to recurring damage from hazards, and to return lands and critical habitat to a more natural state.

The National Park Service uses a performance-based approach to asset management. Ongoing condition inspections and industry-standard modeling software are used to identify maintenance treatments and to prioritize projects which maximize asset lifespan and provide the best value for money. The Federal Highway Administration's Office of Federal Lands Highways is a key partner in the NPS transportation asset management process.

### Asset Conditions

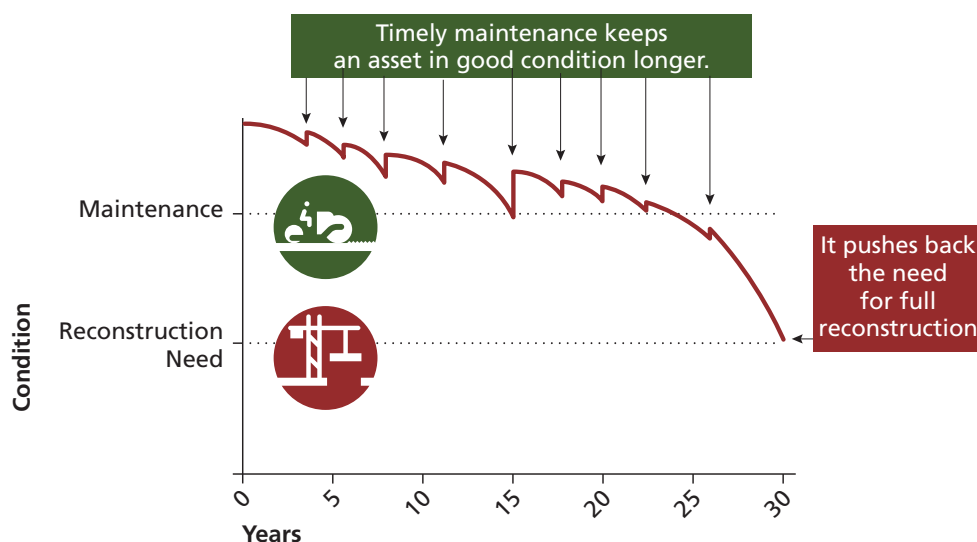
Maintaining a large and diverse transportation system requires a data driven approach. The National Park Service works with FHWA and other partners to continuously monitor pavement and bridge conditions, model future conditions, and develop maintenance and rehabilitation work schedules that optimize system conditions over the long term. The condition of other transportation assets is monitored by park maintenance staff and similarly managed using NPS facility management software and models. The goal of these systems is to maximize long-term system health at the lowest cost to the government (Figure 21).

### Large Fleet Replacement Needs Over the Next 10 Years

NPS-owned transit vehicles have an estimated \$202 million in recapitalization needs between 2023 and 2032. Parks with estimated transit vehicle replacement costs over \$5 million during the next 10 years include Acadia, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Harpers Ferry, Isle Royale, Yosemite, and Zion. As the fleet vehicles continue to be replaced, the National Park Service will evaluate and use improved vehicle technologies to modernize vehicle fleets (Figure 22).

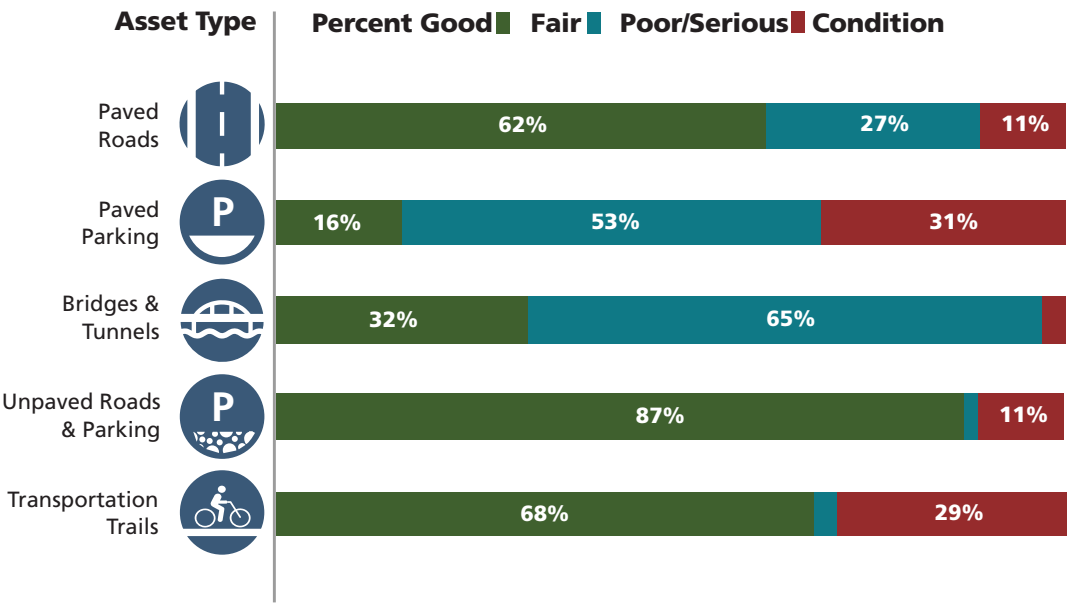
**Figure 20:** Optimally Managed Asset Life Cycle

Timely maintenance keeps an asset in good condition longer.



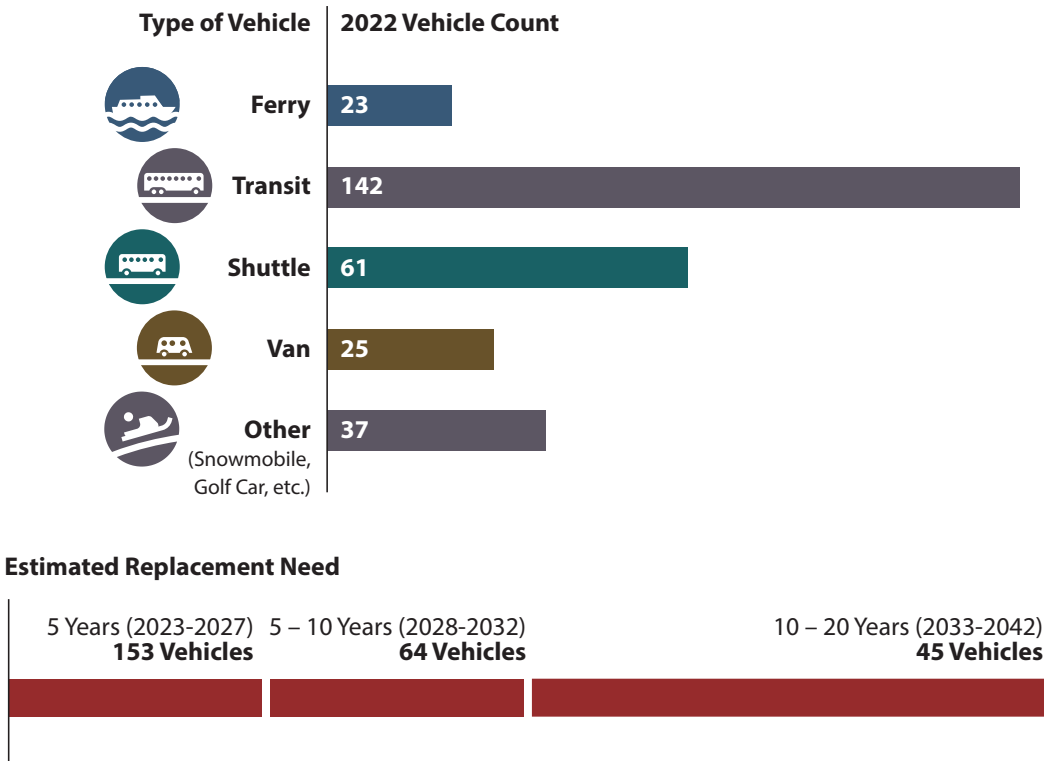
# Figure 21: Transportation Assets Condition by Type

The National Park Service's transportation asset conditions vary based on asset type. Condition Year for Paved Roads, Paved Parking, Bridges, and Tunnels, and Transit Fleet is FY22; Condition Year for Unpaved Roads and Parking and Transportation Trails is FY20. Source: NPS, FHWA



# Figure 22: Transit Fleet Age, Type, and Expected Vehicle Replacement Need

Source: NPS Transit Inventory and Performance Report, 2022



# Strategies

**Maintain Road and Trail Bridges in Good or Fair Condition:** To ensure a safe visitor experience and to maximize the useful life of transportation assets, the National Park Service will prioritize maintenance expenditures to maintain roadway and trail bridges in good or fair condition.

**Maintain Pavement Conditions of High-Priority Assets at the Current Level:** The National Park Service will prioritize maintaining high-priority assets at their current condition level to optimize their lifespan and increase the financial sustainability of the transportation asset portfolio.

**Develop Management Systems for Transit:** The National Park Service will establish consistent condition assessment tools and inventories of NPS-owned transit fleet vehicles, real property assets that support transit system operations, and transportation trails.

**Right-Size the Transportation Asset Portfolio:**

The National Park Service will decommission lower-priority assets to remove maintenance liabilities when transportation assets no longer serve an important function.





## Examples

### Denali Park Road Repaving

The paved portion of the Denali Park Road was last re-surfaced in 1989, and many sections were failing due to year-round use and Alaska's extreme freeze-thaw activity. The resulting rutting and heaving caused vehicles to avoid these rough conditions by moving into the opposite lane, creating unsafe driving conditions. To maintain this critical asset, the National Park Service [replaced all failing asphalt pavement on the Denali Park Road from 2017-2020](#). Resurfacing the Denali Park Road improved safety for all park road users, reduced the backlog of deferred maintenance projects, and enhanced visitor experiences.



### Mount Vernon Trail Rehabilitation

The Mount Vernon Trail is an 18-mile paved multiuse trail that winds along the Potomac River and the George Washington Memorial Parkway. In recent years, the National Park Service has strategically replaced and widened major trail bridges including [Bridge 12](#) and [23 and 24](#) while planning for the rehabilitation and widening of the rest of the trail and other deteriorated bridges. These projects are improving trail condition and correcting safety deficiencies, while addressing significant deferred maintenance.

*Credit: Joe - stock.adobe.com*

## **Objective:**

# **Prioritize Preventive Maintenance and Preservation to Maximize Return on Investment**

Preventive maintenance—maintenance tasks performed on an annual or more frequent basis such as cleaning culverts, inspections, and vegetation control—are key to ensuring transportation assets last as long as they should. Preventive maintenance can keep assets in better condition longer and at lower cost than repairing damage after it has occurred. Similarly, preservation activities (e.g., lighter pavement and bridge construction work) are important to long-term asset management for the same reasons. The National Park Service will prioritize preventive maintenance and preservation work to keep transportation systems in good condition for visitors and to be responsible stewards of public funding.

Park unit staff are often in the best position to perform preventive maintenance work. The National Park Service uses park asset management plans and facility management software to help park staff know when and which activities are needed. Through a partnership with FHWA, maintenance and preservation activities are also identified using pavement and bridge management systems.

However, park staff are often challenged by the routine and preventive maintenance needs of their whole asset inventory, including transportation and other asset types. Tracking when preventive maintenance activities are or are not completed is also a challenge, because these tasks tend to be completed during a busy day of work that spans dozens of activities in a variety of locations. Flat or declining park base operations budgets further complicates this situation, as staff positions funded by base operations funding have declined by 20 percent since 2008.

# Strategies

**Communicate the Importance of Preventive Maintenance:** Provide better information about the importance and benefits of preventive maintenance tasks, effectively communicating the most important activities and when they are due.

**Bundle Preventive Maintenance Projects:** Continue and expand the practice of bundling and contracting preventive maintenance and preservation work for multiple park units.

**Evaluate the Maintenance Needs of New Transportation Technologies:** Better understand long-term costs associated with new technologies and their deployment throughout the NPS transportation network.

## Examples

### Great Smoky Mountains National Park Pavement Preservation

The Cades Cove Loop Road is a 10-mile, paved, one-way scenic drive that was last rehabilitated in 2010. To extend the useful life of the roadway, the park applied a preventive maintenance action to the roadway surface, pullouts, and parking areas that included minor spot repairs (patching), crack sealing, and the application of an ultrathin bonded wearing course overlay.

*Credit: Katie Lamoureux*



### Preventive Maintenance and Preservation Bundling by Regional Offices

Project efficiencies can often be realized by bundling and contracting preventive maintenance and preservation work for two or more park units in the same state or general area. Some NPS regional offices have used this strategy to reduce overall costs and to help take the burden of contracting off individual park units, whose maintenance staff may be stretched thin and have many competing demands for their time. Bundling preventive maintenance and preservation work can also help ensure these annual maintenance activities happen at the right time to provide the greatest benefit to asset condition and lifespan.

*Credit: Luis - stock.adobe.com*







***Arches National Park***

*Credit: S Quintans - stock.adobe.com*



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# Summary of Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures

This section summarizes the goals and objectives of the NTS, including performance measures and indicators that the National Park Service will use to monitor progress towards the goals.

For this document, performance measures are data-based metrics of intended outcomes with an established baseline and target. Performance indicators are additional ways that the National Park Service is monitoring progress, but for which an outcome-based performance measure is not yet available.



## GOAL: Advance Resource Protection

### Performance Indicators

- Flat or increasing trend in number of transportation projects that involve restoration of wildlife corridors and habitats in NPS units.
- Transportation assets that are cultural or historic resources are maintained in equal or better condition as non-cultural or historic transportation assets.
- Decrease in access restrictions due to weather-related disruptions to transportation infrastructure.

### Objectives:

1. Manage Transportation Impacts on Natural Resources
2. Protect and Preserve Cultural Resources and American Recreational Heritage
3. Strengthen Transportation Systems to Withstand Severe Weather



## GOAL: Enhance Visitor Experience and Connect Gateway Communities

### Performance Measures

Number of Motor Vehicle Fatalities (5 year rolling average)

■ Baseline: 60.8 (2015-2019)

■ Target: Declining Annual Trend

### Performance Indicators

- Increase in number of park units with active partnerships to reduce access barriers for residents of neighboring communities.
- Future CSAP responses indicate fewer access barriers and higher rates of visitation, particularly from first-time visitors and people with disabilities.
- Decrease in roadway and parking congestion due to more efficient transportation system management and increased options for accessing parks.
- Increase in the number of emerging mobility strategies being implemented in and around NPS units.

### Objectives:

1. Improve NPS Transportation System Safety
2. Improve Connections to Neighboring Communities
3. Create an Accessible and Welcoming Transportation System
4. Strategically Enhance Transportation Systems to Address Visitor Needs
5. Prepare for the Future of Transportation



Bus shuttles at Zion National Park. Credit: Norman Q/Wirestock Creators - stock.adobe.com

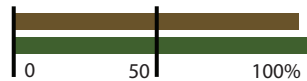


## GOAL: Reinvest in the System and Make Legacy Investments

### Performance Measures

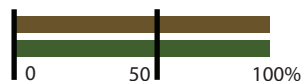
#### Bridge Condition

- Baseline: 97% Good or Fair (2022)
- Target: 100% Good or Fair while maintaining current average network conditions



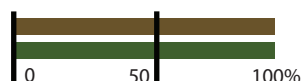
#### Paved Roads and Parking Condition

- Baseline: 85% Good or Fair (2022)
- Target: Maintain Current Condition



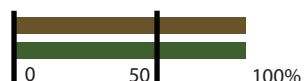
#### Unpaved Roads and Parking Condition

- Baseline: 89% Good or Fair (2022)
- Target: Maintain Current Condition



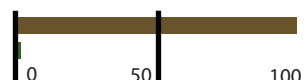
#### Transportation Trails Condition

- Baseline: 71% Good or Fair (2020)
- Target: Maintain Current Condition



#### Transit Vehicles Beyond Planned Replacement Year

- Baseline: 92 (2022)
- Target: 0 (2028)



#### Competitive Grant Applications

- Baseline: 7 (2023)
- Target: 30 (2028)



#### Objectives:

1. Leverage Grants for Major Projects
2. Maintain Condition of Existing Assets
3. Prioritize Preventive Maintenance and Preservation to Maximize Return on Investment

### Performance Indicators

- Increase in the use of project bundling approaches to pavement and bridge project management.
- Amount of funding leveraged from external grants and partnerships.



A bison in a parking lot at Yellowstone National Park. Credit: Cavan - stock.adobe.com

# Conclusion

As the National Park Service moves forward, the NTS will guide NPS transportation decision making in support of its vision to provide safe access to the nation's most special places. The NTS provides updated goals, objectives and strategies that are key to advancing this vision, which will be implemented through our transportation programs, affecting every NPS park unit.

As all agencies must, the National Park Service will operate within the fiscal constraints of its transportation funding to deliver a transportation system that addresses the substantial maintenance needs of the system while also making progress on new challenges and opportunities. The NTS defines a path for the National Park Service to have a stronger focus on safety, improving travel choices for visitors, and executing generational investments to ensure the National Park Service provides a world-class transportation system.

While many of the details in the NTS focus on the next five years, the goals and objectives look out over a longer time-horizon, setting an agenda for achieving ambitious changes in NPS transportation over the long term.

The National Park Service is committed to making an ongoing effort related to transportation planning to ensure safe and enjoyable access to our nation's greatest treasures for future generations. The future of NPS transportation depends on everyone's commitment, creativity, and enthusiasm for realizing this vision. As such, we will take decisive action to achieve the plan's goals and performance targets through continuous work across the agency and with our partners to put NTS strategies into practice.





***Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore***

*Credit: Kevin McCoy*



# Appendix A: Transportation Legacy Investment Project Needs

NPS Transportation Legacy Investment Projects				NPS Transportation Priorities		
State	Park	Project	Estimated Cost			
Alabama	Natchez Trace PKWY	TN River Bridge Reconstruction	\$\$\$\$	✓		✓
Alaska	Denali NP and NPRES	Restore Denali Park Road Deferred Maintenance - Mile 43 to 92	\$		✓	
Alaska	Denali NP and NPRES	Reconstruct Toklat Bridges & Causeway	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓
Arkansas	Buffalo NR	Convert Gravel Roads to Paved Roads	\$\$	✓	✓	✓
California	Golden Gate NRA	Improve Multimodal Connectivity Across Golden Gate	\$\$		✓	
California	Joshua Tree NP	Enhance Non-Motorized Connectivity Between Primary Park Destinations	\$\$		✓	✓
California	Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP	Rehabilitate Mineral King Road	\$\$			✓
California	Yosemite NP	Modernize and Recapitalize Transit Fleet	\$\$	✓		✓
California	Yosemite NP	Rehabilitate Big Oak Flat Road	\$\$			✓
Colorado	Rocky Mountain NP	Repair Trail Ridge Road Scenic Byway	\$\$	✓		✓
Maine	Acadia NP	Improve Hulls Cove Transportation Center	\$		✓	
Maryland	Clara Barton PKWY	Reconstruct Cantilever Bridge	\$\$\$		✓	✓
Massachusetts	Boston NHP	Boston Harbor Blue Infrastructure - Island/Boston Gateway Dock and Pier Improvements	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓
Mississippi	Natchez Trace PKWY	Reconstruct Ridgeland Parkway Motorroad from Milepost 86 to 114.6	\$\$\$			✓
North Carolina	Blue Ridge PKWY	Rehabilitate Sections 2U, 2V, 2X, 2Y & 2Z	\$\$\$			✓
North Carolina, Virginia	Blue Ridge PKWY	Rehabilitate Deficiencies on 33 Bridges	\$\$	✓		✓
Tennessee	Great Smoky Mountains NP	Improve Safety on Gatlinburg Spur Road	\$\$			✓
Utah	Zion NP	Repair SR9 from Canyon Junction to East Entrance	\$\$\$			✓
Virginia	Colonial NHP	Rehabilitate Colonial National Historical Parkway	\$\$\$			✓

## Estimated Costs Key

\$ \$12.5M - \$25M     
 \$\$ \$25M - \$50M     
 \$\$\$ \$50M - \$150M     
 \$\$\$\$ \$150M+

NPS Transportation Legacy Investment Projects				NPS Transportation Priorities		
State	Park	Project	Estimated Cost			
Virginia	George Washington Memorial PKWY	GWMP South Section (Mount Vernon Parkway) Rehabilitation and Bridges and Mount Vernon Trail	\$\$\$\$	✓	✓	
Virginia	George Washington Memorial PKWY	Improve South GWMP (Old Town Alexandria to Mount Vernon Estate) and Mount Vernon Trail South	\$\$	✓	✓	
Virginia	George Washington Memorial PKWY	Rehabilitate Mid-GWMP and Reconstruct Boundary Channel Bridge	\$\$\$		✓	✓
Washington	Mount Rainier NP	Replace Fryingpan Creek Bridge	\$	✓		✓
Washington	Mount Rainier NP	Maintain Visitor Access and Address Hazards on SR410	\$\$	✓		✓
Washington	Mount Rainier NP	Replace and Repair Four Bridges to Maintain Access and Address Hazards	\$\$	✓		✓
Washington	Olympic NP	Rehabilitate Route Sol Duc Road	\$\$			✓
Washington, D.C.	National Mall and Memorial Parks	Rehabilitate Lincoln Circle, Jefferson and Madison Dr., Maine Ave. and 12th Street	\$		✓	✓
West Virginia	New River Gorge NP and NPRES	Conduct Critical Repairs and Improvements to Rend Trail and Bridges	\$	✓	✓	✓
Wyoming	Grand Teton NP	Replace Buffalo Fork Bridge to Improve Wildlife Crossings and Address Hazards	\$\$	✓		✓
Wyoming	Grand Teton NP	Repair and Widen Gros Ventre Road	\$		✓	✓
Wyoming	Yellowstone NP	Reconstruct the Old Faithful Roads to Protect Thermal Features	\$\$\$			✓



National Park Service  
 Washington Support Office  
 Park Planning, Facilities and Lands Directorate  
 For more information, please visit the [NPS Transportation website](https://www.nps.gov/transportation)  
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DRAFT  
 June 2025



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under US administration.