Pacific West Region

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Park Roads and Parkways Program

Surface Transportation
Funding Reauthorization

Generals Highway, Sequoia NP - 2007

Background

The National Park Service (NPS) manages an extensive transportation system that includes approximately 5,450 miles of paved roads, 4,100 miles of unpaved roads, 1,414 bridges, 63 tunnels and 110 alternative transportation systems. The Pacific West Region manages approximately 25% of these assets, with over 1,390 miles of paved park roads in Hawaii, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Since 1926, NPS roads have been maintained by a partnership between the NPS and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which provides engineering and construction administration support. Today the partnership between these two agencies is known as the Park Roads and Parkways Program, which is a component of the Federal Lands Highway Program (FLHP), established by federal legislation in 1982. Funds are allocated on an annual basis to these programs from the federal Highway Trust Fund, which is supported by the federal motor vehicle gas tax and certain excise taxes. Currently, the NPS receives over $200 million annually through this program. The current authorization of transportation funding from the Highway Trust Fund, *Public Law 109—59*, also known as "*SAFETEA-LU*", will expire at the end of FY 2009. Continued funding is needed to repair deteriorating roadway infrastructure and to maintain safe access to our nation's parks.

Current Status

Amphitheater Point, Sequoia N.P., under reconstruction

Since August 2005, with the passage of SAFETEA-LU, the Park Roads and Parkways Program has:

- Funded 320 projects at 116 park units in 42 States, using sound asset management practices aimed at minimizing life-cycle costs;
- Rehabilitated and reconstructed 267.2 miles of roadway and 12 bridges;
- Achieved a 99 percent obligation rate, with 75 percent of funds going to construction and the remainder going to design, environmental compliance, planning and administration.

Partnerships between the NPS and its transportation partners have leveraged limited funding through collaboration and cooperation. NPS funds have been used to purchase or lease vehicles, and partners have taken on operational costs, which typically exceed seven times the vehicle acquisition costs over the vehicle's service life. Partners also frequently cover additional costs of maintenance facilities and training. These arrangements

- yield environmental benefits for both the park and community by reducing emissions with mass transit
- benefit communities that rely on national park visitation for the economic benefits the parks provide
- reduce costs to the NPS for construction and maintenance of parking facilities inside of park boundaries.

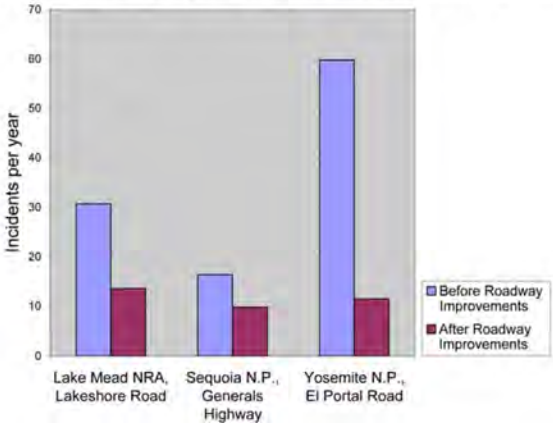
Safety Improvements

The fatal crash rate in National Park units in 2004 was 1.89 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (MVMT), compared to the national average of 1.44 fatalities/MVMT. Narrow travel lanes, eroding road shoulders, and steep, mountainous terrain contribute to higher accident rates in many of our park units.

During the period 2001 through 2005, one person was killed or injured on park roadways every 4.5 hours.

In 2006 the Pacific West Region of the NPS prepared a safety analysis of three recent road reconstruction projects. High accident roadway segments in three separate parks were realigned and reconstructed to better accommodate the modern volumes and types of traffic using the roadways. The study identified significant safety improvements on all three roadways:

Reconstruction of scenic overlook, Mather Memorial Parkway, Mt. Rainier National Park



FY 2010 and Beyond

Reconstructed Amphitheater Point, Generals Highway
Sequoia National Park - 2007

Fitzwater Bridge over canal, Cuyahoga Valley N.P.
28 park road bridges are structurally deficient.

Before & after photos of rehabilitated visitor parking lot at Lassen Volcanic National Park

Road and Bridge Repair

The $20 billion investment in National Park roadway infrastructure is at risk: FHWA data indicates that 88% **of park roads are currently in either "poor" or "fair" condition** requiring repair, resurfacing, rehabilitation, or reconstruction. The associated backlog of deferred maintenance is estimated at $4.5 billion.

Guard wall failure at
Going to the Sun Road,
Glacier National Park

Intelligent Transportation Systems

NPS will deploy ITS technologies to improve safety and reduce congestion, by providing visitors with real-time information on delays from road construction, weather-related road conditions and transit arrival times.

Alternative Transportation Services

The NPS currently has 110 alternative transportation systems in 81 park units nationwide, including alternative-fuel bus systems, rail, and ferries. Sixteen systems are owned and operated by the NPS, and the remainder are provided through concession contracts or cooperative agreements with private and public partners. NPS will continue to develop and implement a sustainable, economical, multi-modal transportation plan for the 21st century.

Accessible trail at Yosemite Falls, Yosemite National Park

The Future of Park Roads

The Park Roads and Parkways Program collects detailed roadway condition data on a continuous cycle, and has developed accurate prediction models that can describe future pavement conditions for our Park roads. These conditions are directly tied to the level of funding that will be available to the Program:

Pavement condition ratings reflect the general condition of the roadways, since drainage structures, guard rail, retaining walls and other features are most often rehabilitated on the same cycle as pavements. Pavement systems represent approximately 65% of the total cost of park roadways. Pavements in Fair or Poor condition require significantly higher maintenance expenditures, and are the cause of many millions of dollars of personal property damage every year.

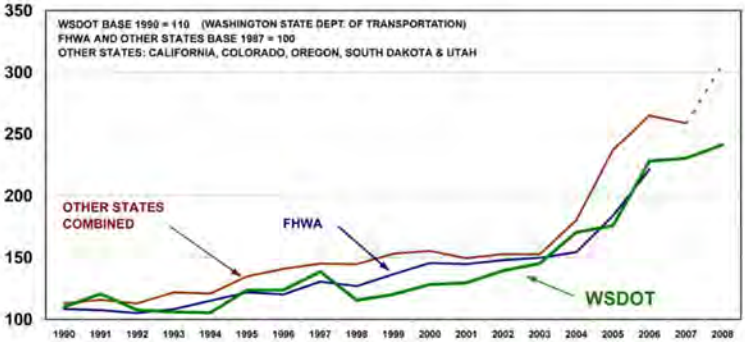
Restoring Park Trail Facilities

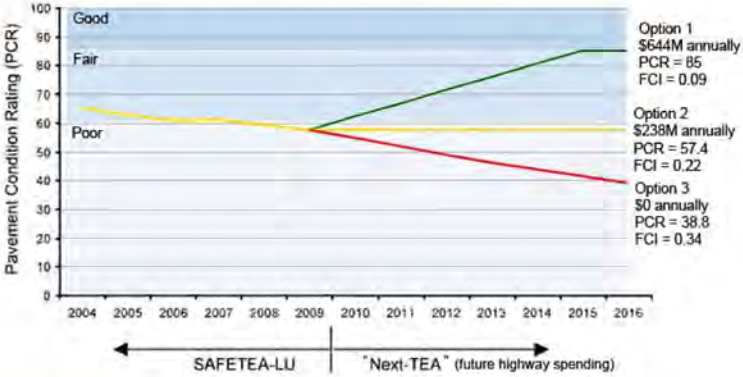
NPS front-country trail facilities must be brought up to an acceptable condition, to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and ensure an appropriate level of service for all park visitors by the 2016 Centennial.

Economic Challenges

The Producer Price Index for Highway & Street Construction (PPI), the Federal Government's index which tracks prices in the transportation construction community, has increased at a rate higher than ordinary price increases (i.e., inflation), severely eroding the purchasing power of the program. In 2003 the NPS reconstructed a mile of road for $1.8 million. Today, that same type of project would cost $3.0 million per mile.

Highway construction prices in the Pacific West Region have closely mirrored this trend:





Recent Events:

Two key studies have been published in the past year: (a) "Transportation for Tomorrow: Report of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission", and (b) United States Department of Transportation's report called, "Refocus. Reform. Renew. A New Transportation Approach for America". Both support the continuation of the Park Roads and Parkways Program under the Federal Lands Highway Program in order to meet the federal responsibility to care for the great American places established by Congress. In addition to these studies, the National Park Service has prepared a Resource Paper outlining surface transportation needs through 2015: National Park Service Transportation Challenge, available at:

http://www.nps.gov/transportation/roads/reauthorization.htm

Contact: Mark H. Hartsoe, Branch Chief – Park Transportation Program (202) 513-7025