

# **Public Scoping Comment and Response Report**

## **Rehabilitation, Repair and Resurfacing of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road (Northside- Southside Drive) Environmental Assessment**



**National Park Service  
Yosemite National Park  
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# Introduction

This report summarizes public scoping comments submitted on the proposed Rehabilitation, Repair and Resurfacing of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road (Northside- Southside Drive) Environmental Assessment (referred to herein as Yosemite Valley Loop Road). The Yosemite Valley Loop Road project proposal was released for public scoping on May 2, 2005, and the National Park Service accepted scoping comments through June 1, 2005. Written public scoping comments were received by fax, email, and U.S. mail. During the scoping period, 11 public comment letters were received. This report provides (1) a summary of Concerns expressed in the public scoping comments received; and (2) a specific response to each identified concern.

## Public Scoping Comments and Responses

Public scoping comments received during the scoping period were reviewed and analyzed using the park's Comment Analysis and Response Database system. Analysis of public scoping letters is comprised of a series of stages which require review and assessment by staff. For example, each letter received is read to determine the discrete points expressed by the author, which is considered to be a "comment". Each discrete sentence or paragraph is then "coded" in order to associate that comment with a particular resource topic or element of the plan (such as cultural resources or the plan's relationship to other projects).

Once all letters have been coded for individual comments, similar comments are grouped together and a "concern statement" is generated, which is intended to capture the main points expressed by the comments. Concern statements are worded in a way that affords the National Park Service the opportunity to respond to a requested action. The National Park Service planning team then prepares responses presenting the National Park Service's reasoning as to how and why Concerns will be incorporated into the planning process.

## Results of Public Scoping Comments

As a result of the public scoping period, the park received over 50 individual comments from 8 individuals, 2 organizations, and 1 tribe. The analysis of these comments generated about 40 general concern statements, which were categorized and considered for this planning process. The National Park Service made available to the public the 30% Design Drawings for this project at the May, 2005 Open House, hosted in the East Auditorium in Yosemite Valley. As such, many scoping comments the park received call for specific actions related to schematic concepts outlined in these 30% Design Drawings, however comment authors were aware those schematic concepts were subject to change based on public scoping comments received for this project.

Some of the main public scoping concerns requested the National Park Service to consider for this project include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Paving and/or removal of specific pullouts along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road.
- Reducing the size of the Fern Spring pullout in order to alleviate impacts to sensitive resources in the vicinity.

- Revegetating areas that are disturbed by grading activities during construction.
- Considering the use of different types of roadside barriers (e.g., barrier stones or curbing) to reduce impacts to areas adjacent to roadside pullouts.
- Maintaining and preserving historic rock work associated with headwalls and wingwalls of culverts.
- Coordinating of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project with the goals identified in the *Yosemite Valley Plan* with regard to proposed future traffic circulation patterns in Yosemite Valley.

Concerns generated through public scoping that are considered to be beyond the scope of this project, include the desire to increase park entrance fees to fund the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project and other park planning projects; the request for scenic vista clearing at prominent – or “iconic view” – pullouts; requests to provide input on plant selection for the Fern Spring Restoration project (a project directly adjacent to the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project); and, the request to include additional segments of Yosemite Valley roads and parking areas outside of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road. All comments received during the scoping period have been duly considered and are now part of the administrative record for this project. The public scoping letters can be viewed on the park’s web site at <http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning/valleyloop/scoping.pdf>.

## **How To Use This Document**

This Public Scoping Comment and Response Report is divided into two sections. The section titled “Out of Scope” lists all scoping concerns that were determined to be beyond the purpose and need, or “scope” of this project. The second section, titled “In Scope” provides a list of scoping concerns, by topic, that that will likely be addressed in the environmental assessment. Concerns presented under each topic include “supporting quotes”, which are excerpts from individual public scoping letters.

These supporting quotes are followed comment author attributes, such as whether the comment author was an individual or an organization (if an organization – a general description of the organization type), the city and state the comment author resides, and the assigned letter and comment number. For example, “(Individual, Merced, CA - #7- 3)” is a letter from an individual in Merced, California – which was the seventh letter received, and the third coded comment from that letter.

Each concern statement and subsequent supporting quotes are followed by a “response” from the National Park Service.

# Concerns, Comments, and Responses

## “Out of Scope”

The following concerns generated from public scoping comments were determined to be beyond the purpose and need of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project.

### **Concern 1: The National Park Service should increase entrance fees in order to pay for the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project, and other future park improvement projects.**

*"I suggest that the cost of admission to the park be increased to pay for this improvement and for other future improvements. Seniors can pay also."*

(Individual, via email, Comment #1-2)

**Response:** Funding for the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project is provided by the Federal Highway Administration through the Federal Highway Lands Program. Entrance fees for Yosemite National Park are established by Congress through the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program and cannot be increased by the National Park Service without congressional approval. Information on projects that are funded by the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program can be found by visiting <http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning/projects/feedemo>.

### **Concern 2: The National Park Service should clarify whether parking areas that are currently being used as temporary employee housing locations will be returned back to day use parking upon completion of the Curry Housing project.**

*"There are many instances of roadside parking currently being used to compensate for previously designated off- road parking areas which have been eliminated. Two glaring examples are at Yosemite Lodge and Yosemite Village where temporary employee housing has been constructed in designated parking areas. Will these paved areas be returned to public parking once new employee housing is finished near Curry Village?"*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment #3- 3)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment is intended to rehabilitate, repave, and restore Northside and Southside Drives and associated drainage facilities and roadside parking exclusively. Day- use parking areas (including those temporarily accommodating employee housing) that are not directly adjacent to the Yosemite Valley Loop Road will not be addressed in this document. However, the National Park Service intends to restore some areas being used as employee housing back to day- use parking areas following completion of the Curry Village Employee Housing project. For more information on the Curry Village Employee Housing project or any other construction project please contact the park’s Construction Information Officer at 209/372- 0437 or email [yose\\_daily\\_report@nps.gov](mailto:yose_daily_report@nps.gov) and request to be placed on the “Gateway Construction Information” list serve.

### **Concern 3: The National Park Service should involve the American Indian Council of Mariposa County in the restoration of Fern Spring, including plant selection.**

*"The tribe would like to be involved in the restoration of Fern Springs and the plant selection."*

(Tribal Organization, Mariposa, CA, Comment #8-1)

**Response:** The National Park Service is currently partnering with the American Indian Council of

Mariposa County and the Yosemite Fund to restore and rehabilitate Fern Spring. The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will be informed by and complement these restoration efforts, however, plant selection for restoration of Fern Spring will not be included as part of this project.

**Concern 4: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should evaluate “vista clearing” in locations where dense thickets of smaller trees are obstructing scenic views, rather than removing large trees.**

*"Can vista clearance be made part of this project? Turnouts are part of the project, and much of the value of the turnout is lost if the view is obstructed. Alders (?) are rapidly obstructing much of the scenery at Valley View, and there are other turnouts where the problem is much worse. The NPS suggests that large trees might be removed at some locations. An adequate rationale needs to be provided. And the value of the tree upon delivery to the mill should NOT be part of it. Why are large, scenic trees being cut, while dense thickets of smaller trees are allowed to grow unfettered, choking out the scenery?"*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-6)

**Response:** Scenic vista clearing will not be evaluated as part of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project because the purpose of this project is to rehabilitate the roadway, which includes drainage facilities and roadside parking. The National Park Service is currently developing a Vista Management Plan that will evaluate scenic and/or historic vistas in Yosemite Valley which could include recommendations for scenic vista clearing in certain locations. However, removal of roadside vegetation will be evaluated as part of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project in the context of whether obstructs driver visibility and/or impacting infrastructure such as culverts. In addition, a rationale for the removal of a select few large trees will be provided and evaluated in the environmental assessment.

**Concern 5: The National Park Service should use "re-vegetation in progress" signs to reduce visitor impacts to wetland areas.**

*"Visitor impacts to the [adjacent] wetland could be controlled with appropriate "re-vegetation in progress," signs."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-17)

**Response:** Placement of signs intended to direct visitor impacts out of sensitive areas will not be considered as a part of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project. However, National Park Service restoration staff will continue to identify locations where signage intended to direct visitor impacts out of sensitive areas is needed within Yosemite National Park. These decisions could be guided by the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) program pursuant to the User Capacity Management Program outlined in the *Revised Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* should those areas be within the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor.

**Concern 6: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should consider elevating the road surface in specific areas to avoid access closures during minor flood events.**

*"The project to resurface Northside and Southside Drives should include raising the elevation of the road surface about one foot in four locations to avoid having to close access into and out of Yosemite Valley during minor flood events. The locations include Chapel Straight on Southside Dr; the low areas on either side of Middle Brother Slide and the area from Waski Pond to Devils Elbow on Northside Dr."*

(Individual, El Portal, CA, Comment #7- 1)

*"The areas of Bridalveil, Sentinel, Eagle and Ribbon Creeks had water overflowing the road and should be addressed."*

(Individual, El Portal, CA, Comment #7-2)

**Response:** No changes to the grade and elevation of the roadway are proposed at this time as changes to roadway elevation would be considered a major roadway reconstruction element. As such, the road prism would need to be considerably widened to support an effective elevation change. This type of action will not be considered as part of this maintenance repair project. However, the National Park Service may consider alternative types of roadway subgrade or base materials, such as permeable subgrade (larger aggregate material to allow for swifter passage of water below the road), in low lying areas prone to seasonal flooding and/or long period of standing water.

## "In Scope"

The following concerns generated from public scoping comments define issues that could be addressed in the Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment.

## Planning Process and Policy

### Acceptable/desired levels of development

**Concern 7: The National Park Service should implement the proposed project.**

*"The improvements as proposed sound very good. I approve of the plan!"*

(Individual, via email, Comment #1-1)

*"This particular project is badly needed and I support it 100%."*

(Individual, Burbank, CA, Comment #2-1)

**Response:** The National Park Service recognizes this concern. The initial proposal has been refined and strengthened as a result of public scoping comments and will only be implemented contingent on the signing of a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by the National Park Service's Director of the Pacific West Region.

### Clarity of planning documents

**Concern 8: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should identify structural features (e.g., culverts and pullouts) by a numeric system in Environmental Assessment graphics.**

*"It would vastly facilitate commenting on specific turnouts if each one had an identifying number on the map. Perhaps based on the exact distance from a starting reference point, as is done with structures along highways. The same could be true of the culverts. Don't the maintenance people have some way of identifying which culvert they are talking about?"*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-11)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will provide graphics that identify structural features by type (e.g., culverts and pullouts) with accompanying tables and/or legends so that their locations are accurate, and easy to decipher, along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road. Topographical survey information, which provides specific locations of these structural features, will be used to develop these graphics. The topographical survey information that will be used for this environmental assessment is the same information that the park maintenance staff uses to locate these very same structural features. Design drawings associated with the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project are available upon request. The level of detail contained within these design drawings will not be included in the environmental assessment graphics. However, the analysis provided in the Environmental Consequences section of the environmental assessment will be based on 70% design drawings.

## Planning goals

### **Concern 9: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should include the portion of Southside Drive between Housekeeping Camp and the Curry Village intersection.**

*"The portion of Southside Drive between Housekeeping Camp and the Curry Village intersection should be included in the project."*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment #3-7)

**Response:** The portion of Southside Drive between Housekeeping Camp and the Curry Village intersection will be included in the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project. Proposed improvements to this portion of the road includes rehabilitation of drainage culverts, repaving the roadway, regrading adjacent roadside parking, and reconstructing curbing between the roadway and adjacent bicycle pathway.

### **Concern 10: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should maintain present road width and alignment, as well as existing roadside pullout locations and capacity.**

*"Although it is proposed that there are to be no changes in parking capacity, the thrust of the project is to curb user- designated parking. Eliminating the user's ability to stop and park does change the total parking capacity."*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment #3-1)

*"The present road width and alignment should be maintained and with some relatively minor adjustments in location the current pullout/parking space capacity should be maintained."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-2)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road project is not proposing to change roadside parking capacity. In general, adjacent roadside parking will be rehabilitated according to its current condition (e.g., paved pullouts will be repaved; gravel or dirt pullouts will be regraded/graded and graveled). In a few select locations, improvements are proposed to the existing condition of roadside parking such as paving a pullout that is currently unpaved. Should parking capacity along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road undergo a change, those changes would be guided by concerns for public safety or the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) program pursuant to the User Capacity Management Program outlined in the *Revised Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement*.

### **Concern 11: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should be guided by the goals outlined in the Yosemite Valley Plan that converts Southside Drive to two-way traffic and Northside Drive between Yosemite Lodge and El Capitan Crossover to a pedestrian and bicycle path way.**

*"In connection with this project, I want to point out that the Yosemite Valley Plan (page 2- 49) calls for the eventual conversion of "Southside Drive from El Capitan crossover to Curry Village to two- way traffic, one lane each direction (road widened where necessary). Northside Drive from El Capitan crossover to Yosemite Lodge from a vehicle road to a multi- use (bicycle and pedestrian) paved trail." I hope that whatever work is done in connection with this proposed rehabilitation will be done with this eventual goal in mind...And, I hope that whatever work is done on Northside Drive will keep in mind that, even after it turns into a paved trail, it will be needed for general purpose automobile traffic in cases of emergency. (for example, fire in the Valley, or rock slides on the Southside Drive.)"*

(Individual, Oberlin, OH, Comment #10-1)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road project is intended to serve as a long over due – interim – maintenance repair project, that does *not* implement those elements, as described above, of the *Yosemite Valley Plan* (e.g., the conversion of Southside Drive to two- way traffic between El Capitan Cross- over and Curry Village, and the conversion of Northside Drive between the Yosemite Lodge and El Capitan Cross- over to a multi- use trail). Because the goals that guide the *Yosemite Valley Plan* are visionary; numerous, subsequent “implementation level” planning processes will be required prior to those elements being implemented. As such, the proposed improvements for the Yosemite Valley Loop Road project will not inhibit or “set the stage” for the goals of the *Yosemite Valley Plan*.

## **Park Resources**

### **Analysis of Existing Conditions/Need for Further Analysis**

**Concern 12: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should evaluate whether certain turnouts are impacting resources and are in need of closure, as well as provide a rational for closing or paving specific turnouts.**

*"Are there some turnouts which are impacting the resources so greatly that they need to be closed? A rationale needs to be provided for closures, as well as for paving."*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-3)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will provide a rational for any proposed changes to the condition of an existing roadside pullout (e.g., paving and gravel pullout or closure of a pullout) in the Alternatives section of the environmental assessment. An analysis of any associated impacts would be presented in the Environmental Consequences section of the environmental assessment. The Yosemite Valley Loop Road project will evaluate the closure or roadside pullouts based on operational needs or public safety concerns. Decisions regarding the closure of roadside pullouts due to impacts to resources would be evaluated under the Visitor Experience and Resources Protection (VERP) program pursuant to the User Capacity Management Program outlined in the *Revised Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement*.

**Concern 13: The National Park Service should recognize that “scenic vistas” are not the only places where parking is needed and that informal pullouts have been established for other reasons.**

*"Visitors have found reason to park there (informal pullouts), or the turnout wouldn't have become established. Scenic vistas are not the only places where parking is needed."*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-12)

**Response:** The National Park Service recognizes that there are numerous opportunities for visitor enjoyment and recreation along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road, which are not limited to only scenic viewing areas. The National Park Service intends to continue providing those opportunities for visitor use and should any future changes to the availability of roadside parking be proposed, those actions would need to be evaluated under the Visitor Experience and Resources Protection (VERP) program pursuant to the User Capacity Management Program outlined in the *Revised Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement*.

## Management Direction

**Concern 14: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should propose a reduction in size of the Fern Spring and nearby pullout to reduce impacts to plant, animal and water life and recognize Fern Spring as a sacred area.**

*"The pullout for Fern Spring area should be reduced in size to reduce impact on the resources (meaning plant life, animal life, and water life) and to honor Fern Spring as a sacred source of life."*

(Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #6-1)

*"The next pullout after Fern Spring should not be paved for the protection of that water source as well."*

(Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #6-3.)

*"The pullout [Fern Spring] should only be wide enough for a large car and reduced in size this will minimize impact to the area or completely removed as a turn out."*

(Tribal Organization, Mariposa, CA, Comment #8-2)

**Response:** The National Park Service is currently partnering with the American Indian Council of Mariposa County and the Yosemite Fund to restore and rehabilitate Fern Spring. The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will be informed by and complement these restoration efforts. As such, the Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will consider a reduction in the size of the Fern Spring pullout within the Alternatives section of the environmental assessment.

## Vegetation

**Concern 15: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should maintain large Ponderosa pines and Black Oak trees along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road.**

*"(30% Design Drawing) Sheet C. 9 Top: Do not remove large Ponderosa and Black Oak (impacting?) road."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-10)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will evaluate the removal of a few select large trees in locations where they are compromising the function of roadway drainage facilities or are creating an unsafe condition for larger recreational vehicles, buses or park garbage trucks due to their leaning over the roadway. Proposed removal of these trees would be presented in the Actions Common To All Action Alternatives section of the environmental assessment. An analysis of any associated impacts would be presented in the Environmental Consequences section of the environmental assessment.

**Concern 16: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should propose removal of small trees that will impact culverts.**

*"The single small 10- 15 foot Yellow Pine at the east end of the existing pullout should be removed to accommodate expansion as it presently is or soon will impact culvert drainage."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-16)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will evaluate selective brush clearing and/or removal of small diameter trees (under 12") in locations where they are compromising the function of roadway drainage facilities or are creating an unsafe driving conditions due to poor visibility in locations where two roads merge (e.g., where Wawona Road joins Southside Drive). Proposed removal

of these trees would be presented in the Actions Common To All Action Alternatives section of the environmental assessment. An analysis of any associated impacts would be presented in the Environmental Consequences section of the environmental assessment.

**Concern 17: The National Park Service should consider re-routing ditches in order to protect large oaks.**

*"(30% Design Drawing) Sheet C. 23 Top: Could paved ditch be routed around "large oak?"*  
(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-19)

**Response:** The National Park Service intends to minimize and/or avoid any potential impacts to Black Oaks, wherever possible. Roadside drainage ditches will be designed in a manner to avoid impacts to oaks, despite previous versions of design drawings that indicated otherwise. As a result of this public comment, the National Park Service has redesigned the drainage ditch in the above referenced location.

## **Wetlands**

### **Management Direction**

**Concern 18: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should expand the size and number of culverts to help restore wetland health.**

*"There are numerous Valley sites where wetlands are being deprived of moisture due to insufficient drainage. Expanding the size and number of road culverts to return drainage channels to natural flow patterns should be a major consideration in both the planning and implementation stages of the project"*  
(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-1)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will propose additional culverts to improve drainage into wetland areas adjacent to the roadway (e.g., Bridalveil and El Capitan Meadows) and in areas that experience high volume spring run-off (e.g., Sentinel Creek and Ribbon Creek drainages). In addition, test sections of permeable subgrade are proposed through portions of meadows to facilitate improved drainage into these lower lying areas that are transected by the Yosemite Valley Loop Road. These actions would be presented in the Actions Common To All Action Alternatives section of the environmental assessment. An analysis of any associated impacts would be presented in the Environmental Consequences section of the environmental assessment.

## **Cultural Resources**

### **Historic Structures**

**Concern 19: The National Park Service should preserve, restore and/or reuse historic stonework associated with headwalls and culverts along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road.**

*"While you [National Park Service] have stated that you will attempt to preserve stone headwalls and culverts, you have also stated that "Existing stone masonry at culvert headwalls and outlets may be salvaged and*

*reused." Attempt and May are not much reassurance that a real effort will be made to preserve and restore these historic stone works. Please make an effort and reassure us that it will be done."*

(Individual, Sacramento, CA, Comment #5-1)

**Response:** The National Park Service has an obligation to protect and preserve historic features, such as headwalls, wingwalls, dissipater aprons at culvert outlets, and retaining walls that are considered to be contributing elements of the Yosemite Valley Historic District. There are numerous historic features along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road that will be rehabilitated in accordance with the Section 106 determination. For example, existing stones will be salvaged and reused to reconstruct headwalls (in the same location) of culverts that are being upsized. And, should additional stones be needed to reconstruct a headwall they will be selected in a manner so that they will match the character of the original stone.

## **Visitor Experience**

### **Visitor Activities**

**Concern 20: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should identify the impacts to the visitor experience caused by the need to park, including the need for buses to park.**

*"What is the impact of this project on the quality of the visitor experience? And that includes the need to park, including buses."*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-4)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road project aims to improve the quality of the Visitor Experience through proposed improvements to accessibility and safety along the roadway (including better drainage and visibility). Access to roadside parking will not be compromised as part of this maintenance project, and the overall condition of roadside parking is proposed to be improved. All roadside locations that buses have access to will be maintained as part of this project; however, long- term bus parking in Yosemite Valley (currently designated at Yosemite Lodge) will not be evaluated as part of this project.

## **Visitor Services**

### **Management Direction**

**Concern 21: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should propose an informational sign, prior to Fern Spring, indicating that visitor services are available at Bridalveil Fall.**

*"Also a sign before the visual sighting of Fern Spring to indicate a bathroom/information area is up ahead (i.e. 1 mile or less for example at Bridalveil Falls restroom/parking area)"*

(Individual, Yosemite, CA, Comment #6-2)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will evaluate the need for road signage with regard to public safety, visitor experience and resource protection as it relates to the management of traffic circulation and site- specific roadside parking. Specific signage prior to or at the Fern Spring pullout would be designed to work in concert with the restoration work in progress at that particular location. These actions would be presented as elements of alternatives and evaluated in the environmental consequences section of the planning document.

**Concern 22: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should formally define roadside parking with pavement and curbing in some areas in order to improve visitor safety, reduce resource damage, and provide opportunity to absorb the scenery.**

*"How can this project best accommodate the need to provide ample opportunities for the visitor to stop and absorb the magnificent scenery? Regardless of whether the visitor is in a car or a bus, that opportunity should be enhanced, not impaired. That probably means paving some of the unpaved turnouts."*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-2)

*"Too many novice visitors park haphazardly and create dangerous driving conditions for other cars and visitors and they damage the fragile environment by their willy nilly and inconsiderate parking. We see it all the time and it's a wonder more people and cars aren't hit. Formally defined parking areas will be a big improvement."*

(Individual, Burbank, CA, Comment #2-2)

*"Asphalt paving may be preferred to rock or gravel base in most turnouts as it has greater endurance and can be more easily removed if future changes are warranted."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-5)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will evaluate improvements to the current condition of existing roadside parking that is not paved in the context of amount of visitor use, access it provides to recreational opportunities and/or visitor services. Paving and curbing pullout that are currently unpaved will be evaluated on a site specific basis. These actions would be presented as elements of alternatives and evaluated in the environmental consequences section of the planning document.

## Wayside Exhibits

**Concern 23: The National Park Service should post signs that clearly identify time limits for parking at scenic vistas and provide interpretive information to improve the visitor experience.**

*"In this case lack of effort on your part has created turnouts and parking in areas that often are not the best for the visitor or the resources to be preserved. But this does not mean that clearly posted instruction that turnout are for short term observation of the scenic vistas, and the parking is limited to 15 minutes and visitors must be in near their cars in small parallel parking spots are not of value to both. Clearly marked and post time limits and instructions and interruptive signage to help the visitor enjoy their experience is often an easier way to move the visitor along."*

(Individual, Sacramento, CA, Comment #5-2)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment may evaluate the replacement of road signage with regard to public safety and visitor services. However, interpretive information and/or wayside exhibits are not within the scope of this project, although locations where signage is needed could be informed by this project.

**Concern 24: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should propose a "Scenic Vista Ahead" sign prior to the Woski Pond pullout in addition to expanding current roadside parking in the area.**

*"The Woskey Pond turnout should be extended so there is more opportunity for visitors to appreciate this world-famous view of Cathedral Rocks and the Spires. A sign ("Scenic Vista Ahead") should be placed east of this turnout to alert drivers to the fact that it is coming up. As it is very easily missed by the inexperienced."*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-5)

*"(30% Design Drawing) Sheet C. 20 Top: Here is a major concern. The existing limited pullout is located at one of west Valley's most famous views. A high priority should be given to expanding this roadside parking area."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-15)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment may evaluate the replacement of road signage with regard to public safety and visitor services. Because Woski Pond is considered to be a sensitive wetland area as well as a scenic vista, the environmental assessment may consider a range of alternatives for designated roadside parking in this and many other areas along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road.

## **Transportation**

### **Transportation Infrastructure & Services**

#### **Concern 25: The National Park Service should retain the one-way road system in Yosemite Valley.**

*"The one-way road system established 35 years ago in Yosemite Valley by D. Jackson Faustman should be retained."*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment #3-5)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Project does not propose any changes to existing traffic circulation patterns. The National Park Service will continue to have the discretion to alter traffic circulation patterns during times of heavy traffic congestion, construction activities, and other natural events such as rockslides, downed trees and flooding.

#### **Concern 26: The National Park Service should consider bus and truck traffic during pavement design to reduce pavement failure.**

*"Pavement design should consider bus and truck traffic as well. An example of repeated pavement failure is in the bus loop in front of the Village Store."*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment #3-6)

**Response:** This project proposes to recycle existing roadway materials and use them as a base layer for newly laid asphalt. Heavy traffic loading and use of the roadway by heavier vehicles such as buses and/or RVs is expected to continue after project completion. The rehabilitated and resurfaced roadway design life is expected to last 20 years, and is not expected to be compromised by bus and truck traffic.

## Roads and Pathways

**Concern 27: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should maintain current road level near and over Humpback Bridge in order to maintain the historic integrity of the road and bridge.**

*"The area of Humpback Bridge on Northside Dr was also affected, but I do not suggest elevating the road in this location as long as the above mentioned improvements to Northside Dr are implemented. Access to and from the Lodge could occur using Northside Dr to the west. The approaches to Humpback have previously been elevated and any further increases would be a detriment to this historic feature and a new bridge is planned for vehicle traffic near this location in the future."*

(Individual, El Portal, CA, Comment #7-3)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment intends to rehabilitate, repair and repave the roadway and associated roadside parking. Of the five bridges included within this project (Pohono, El Capitan Crossover, Sentinel, Stoneman, and Humpback), only the El Capitan Crossover Bridge has planned rehabilitation. Condition and integrity of the remaining bridges will be maintained, with the exception of new asphalt.

**Concern 28: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should address lane widths and turning radii with regard to the needs of larger vehicles.**

*"Although no widening or realignment of the roadway is proposed in this project, consideration should be given to re- establishing adequate lane width and shoulders for safety...Large vehicles, however, require adequate lane widths and turning radii, both of which should be addressed in this project."*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment #3-4)

**Response:** Lane widths and turning radii on the Yosemite Valley Loop Road currently accommodate the requirements of large RV's and commercial buses. This project proposes to rehabilitate, repair, and repave the existing roadway to a standard lane width of 10 feet, with 1 foot paved shoulders wherever possible (in some locations, lane width may be restricted by trees and would not be suited for proposed lane widths).

**Concern 29: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should consider turn lanes and safe pedestrian crossings where necessary.**

*"Intersection re- design should provide additional width for turn lanes where necessary and safe pedestrian crossings."*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment #3-8)

**Response:** This project does not propose additional turning lanes; however, pedestrian crossings will be examined for appropriate public safety, and American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

**Concern 30: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should identify the pros and cons of different types of roadside barriers including boulders, and asphalt-, concrete-, or granite-curbings.**

*"The jury seems to be out on the issue of whether rows of boulders or asphalt/concrete/granite curbs are preferable... What are the pros and cons of each different type of barrier?"*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-9)

*"Removing unsightly roadside boulders and replacing them with asphalt or concrete curbing should be done wherever possible to prevent encroachment into sensitive resource areas."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-3)

*"Curbing should not be used in non-sensitive areas to minimize infrastructure where it is not essential and to allow parking for emergency or disabled vehicles."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-4)

**Response:** The type and placement of roadside barriers will be evaluated as part of this project with regard to their functionality, necessity, and appropriateness within the Yosemite Valley Historic District. These actions would be presented as elements of alternatives and evaluated in the environmental consequences section of the planning document.

**Concern 31: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should consider options for a more natural appearance when distinguishing the pathway from the roadway along Chapel Strait.**

*"How can the separation between vehicle surface and trail best be given a more natural appearance? (It's not good now, and the drawing suggests it could become worse.)"*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-10)

*"(30% Design Drawing) Sheet C. 9 Top and Bottom: I suggest a high priority be given to maintaining the approximately 6 foot wide vegetation strip along this section of road between the bicycle lane and pullout parking. This strip could be replanted with low growing native shrubs, providing a natural condition to mitigate the combined impacts of roadway, bikeway and parking along this visually sensitive and highly scenic area."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-11)

**Response:** Maintenance and/or improvement to pathways directly adjacent to the Yosemite Valley Loop Road will be evaluated in the Environmental Assessment. These actions would be presented as elements of the alternatives and evaluated in the environmental consequences section of the planning document.

## Parking

**Concern 32: The National Park Service should make public the most recent parking capacity survey done in Yosemite Valley.**

*"Parking capacity in Yosemite Valley has been previously addressed but never completely. Before the NPS proposes further limitations on parking, a fair and honest appraisal of where designated parking existed in the past would yield a total parking capacity for Yosemite Valley. Revealing that number to the public would aid in understanding what is already being done to limit public access."*

(Individual, Redwood City, CA, Comment # 3-2)

**Response:** The National Park Service completed a "Parking Inventory for Yosemite Valley, Wawona, the Merced River Gorge, and the El Portal Administrative Site" (herein referred to as Parking Inventory) to

serve as the basis for the Interim Facility Limits on Parking identified in the *Revised Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement*. The Parking Inventory surveyed all existing roadside parking locations within Yosemite Valley, of which the Yosemite Valley Loop Road is included. As such, the Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment is guided by the findings presented in the Parking Inventory, which is available to the public upon request.

**Concern 33: The National Park Service should remove parking availability between El Capitan Crossover Bridge and where El Capitan Crossover and Northside Drive merge as it causes a visual impact to the scenic quality of the meadow.**

*"It is proposed to pave the defacto parking strips where the El Cap Crossover joins Northside Drive. The lines of vehicles parked in that location are exceptionally intrusive; because westbound traffic on Northside Drive comes at them broadside, the visual impact of the parked vehicles is greatly magnified. Parking in that highly visible location should be blocked off. Parking in that location is not even needed, as there is almost always unused parking toward the west end of the El Cap Straight... What is the justification for formalizing this highly offensive parking?"*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-7)

**Response:** The National Park Service is not proposing any changes to the location of parking in the vicinity of El Capitan Meadow/Straight area at this time nor would those actions be evaluated in the planning document. Currently, the parking availability between El Capitan Crossover Bridge and where El Capitan Crossover and Northside Drive provides necessary access for emergency vehicles and a staging area for Search and Rescue operations annually. Any changes to the availability and/or location of parking within the vicinity of El Capitan Meadow/Straight area would need to be proposed under a separate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance process, in which the public would have the ability to participate in.

**Concern 34: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should consider consolidating and/or increasing roadside parking at specific locations to compensate for decreased capacity at other roadside pullouts.**

*"(30% Design Drawing) Sheet C. 18 Bottom: The large size and location of the Big Oak pullout might be used to accommodate increased or decreased capacity of pullouts in other road sections. A small change in capacity in other areas could be accommodated here without much impact. Also pavement would be preferred over gravel- dust potholes etc. Obliterate small pullout across road as indicated."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-13)

*"(30% Design Drawing) Sheet C. 19 Bottom: Is pullout needed here directly across from El Capitan picnic area where parking is available out of traffic flow? These spaces could be expanded in the next pullout west (C. 19 Bottom right) and provide additional parking for a very short walk to the Woski Pond view sight."*

(Individual, El Dorado Hills, CA, Comment #4-14)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road project is not proposing to change roadside parking capacity. However, based on public comments, some minor adjustments are proposed in the location of a few select pullouts that would remove some roadside pullouts and consolidate them in nearby areas. Should parking capacity along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road undergo a change, those changes would be guided by concerns for public safety or the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) program pursuant to the User Capacity Management Program outlined in the *Revised Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement*.

**Concern 35: The National Park Service should reduce the size of Teddy Roosevelt pullout.**

*"Teddy Roosevelt turnout needs to be reduced there are too many cars and people walking in roadway safety problem for years."*

(Tribal Organization, Mariposa, CA, Comment #8-3)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will evaluate the size of Theodore Roosevelt pullout based on this public comment. Should a reduction in the size of the Theodore Roosevelt pullout be proposed, this action would be presented an element within the alternatives and evaluated in the environmental consequences section of the planning document.

**Concern 36: The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment should clarify whether all unpaved pullouts will be paved, or removed.**

*"The Fact Sheet (4/05) for this project leaves room for interpretation. On the one hand it seems critical of roadside parking. (Last two sentences of paragraph: "Roadside parking is, for the most part, user designated..." and "This haphazard parking continues..."). On the other hand, the last paragraph speaks of "...defining and/or formalizing existing roadside parking..." So will this project result in obliteration of all unpaved turnouts, or paving of all of them?"*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-1)

**Response:** The Yosemite Valley Loop Road Environmental Assessment will evaluate the current condition of roadside pullouts adjacent to the Yosemite Valley Loop Road as part of this planning process. In general, adjacent roadside parking will be rehabilitated according to its current condition (e.g., paved pullouts will be repaved; gravel or dirt pullouts will be regraded/graded and graveled). In a few select locations, improvements are proposed to the existing condition of roadside parking such as paving a pullout that is currently unpaved. Changes to the existing condition of roadside pullouts will be presented as elements of the alternatives and evaluated in the environmental consequences section of the planning document.

**Concern 37: The National Park Service should consider the dangerous condition caused by blocking roadside shoulders and implement "Emergency Parking Only" concept to deter parking in certain areas.**

*"Can the dangerous condition created by blocking road shoulders be justified? Couldn't the concept of "Emergency Parking Only" be implemented, as it is in other areas?"*

(Conservation Organization, Fresno, CA, Comment #11-8)

**Response:** The National Park Service will consider the placement of roadside shoulder barriers in the context of roadway drainage, visitor safety, resource protection, accessibility, and the appropriateness within the Yosemite Valley Historic District. Generally, the placement of curbing along roadway shoulders has been proposed to facilitate efficient and effective roadway drainage. Placement of barrier stones along roadway shoulders has been proposed to reduce impacts to informal parking along the Yosemite Valley Loop Road. These actions would be presented as elements of the alternatives and evaluated in the environmental consequences section of the planning document.