



Transportation System Operations: COVID-19 Management Practices

National Park Service

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Purpose

This guidance is intended to inform those that oversee or operate transportation systems in parks of common COVID-19 practices pertaining to transportation systems. Transportation systems are defined as all types of passenger conveyances and related vehicles (e.g., buses, shuttles, tour vehicles, trains, air transport, snow coaches, tour boats, and ferries). These may be NPS-operated, contractor-operated, or partner-operated (e.g., concessioner, commercial use authorization, or other partner). The NPS is developing separate guidance for operations that provide transportation (e.g., tours) beyond the park, from destination to destination.

Background

On January 20, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order (EO) #13991: [Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing](#) setting a clear goal of halting the spread of COVID-19 by relying on the best available data and science which includes the wearing of face masks while around others, maintaining physical distance from others whenever possible, and adhering to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, on January 22, 2021, the President issued EO #13998: [Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel](#). The CDC issued an order implementing aspects of EO #13998 titled "[Requirement for Persons to Wear Masks While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs.](#)"

Transportation system operators must follow the requirements as outlined in these authorities when operating in national parks. Furthermore, transportation systems must comply with other applicable federal requirements regarding COVID-19. Park managers may adopt local or state-specific requirements when necessary to protect public health and safety if the requirements are more stringent

than the federal requirements. Operators must meet the standards adopted by the park but may implement requirements that exceed park-instituted requirements and guidelines.

Transportation System COVID-19 Management Practices

The following sections provide COVID-19-related management practices on face masks, social distancing, cleaning, and vehicle modifications.

When identifying the appropriate prevention measures, consider the risk of exposure given what is known about how the virus spreads. The greatest risk of COVID-19 is from respiratory droplets transmitted during close, prolonged contact with an infected person (for more information, see CDC's [Science Brief on SARS-CoV-2 and Potential Airborne Transmission](#)). Short rides (i.e., less than 15 minutes) in a well-ventilated conveyance is a situation with much lower risk of exposure than a longer conveyance ride, especially if the conveyance is poorly ventilated. For questions on risk, confer with a Regional Public Health Consultant.

Face Masks

[EO #13998](#) and the supplemental [CDC Order](#) requires face masks to be worn by all travelers while on public transportation (which includes all passengers and all personnel operating conveyances). People must wear masks that completely cover both the mouth and nose while awaiting, boarding, disembarking, or traveling. The Order is accompanied by [CDC guidance](#).

Public transportation operators must use best efforts to ensure that all passengers wear a mask. Depending on the circumstances, public transportation operators must take the following actions:

- Board only people who wear masks
- Instruct people that wearing a mask properly is a requirement of federal law and that not complying with the requirement is a violation of federal law
- Monitor the conveyance for any person who is not wearing a mask and seek compliance from such a person
- At the earliest safe opportunity, disembark any person who refuses to comply
- Notify people of the requirement to make sure they are aware of and comply with the requirement to wear a mask. Examples of such notifications are messaging in apps, on websites or through email; posting posters in multiple languages with illustrations; and printing the information on tickets.

Public transportation operators should refuse service to anyone not wearing a face mask. Operators should immediately contact a NPS Law Enforcement Ranger or comparable enforcement authority if there is a law enforcement issue. People are not required to wear a mask under the following circumstances:

- While eating, drinking, or taking medication for brief periods of time and while maintaining at least six feet of distance from others
- While communicating, for brief periods of time and while maintaining at least six feet of distance from others, with a person who is hearing impaired when the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication
- If, on an aircraft, wearing of oxygen masks is needed because of loss of cabin pressure or other event affecting aircraft ventilation

- If unconscious (for reasons other than sleeping), incapacitated, unable to be awakened, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
- When necessary to temporarily remove the mask to verify one's identity.

The following categories of people are exempt from the requirement to wear a mask:

- A child under the age of 2 years
- A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

The NPS recognizes some visitors may have health-related reasons for not wearing masks. Although the NPS is not authorized to exempt individuals from wearing masks due to disabilities or other medical conditions, NPS staff, volunteers, and concessioners should work with those individuals to provide alternative means of accessing activities and services when possible.

Social Distancing

CDC's [guidelines on protecting yourself when using transportation](#) identify social distancing as a key defense in the spread of COVID-19. The CDC recommends maintaining a distance of at least six feet (about two arms' length) from other people, where possible. In order to reduce risk to riders on vehicles, transportation system operators should consider the following prevention measures related to vehicle occupancy:

- Limit the number of passengers per vehicle
- Close every other row of seats
- Designate empty seats; households (i.e., cohorts) of visitors can sit together
- For conveyances with multiple doors, institute rear door boarding/exiting, persons requiring a wheelchair ramp exempted
- Skip stops if the vehicle becomes too crowded to maintain social distancing between passengers (e.g., establish "drop-off only" procedures to prevent pick-ups when capacity has been reached).

To promote social distancing at bus stops, terminals, or waiting areas, transportation system operators should consider implementing the following prevention measures:

- Encourage social distancing (six-feet apart) when disembarking
- Mark where visitors can stand by painting or affixing markers for proper spacing
- Establish means to stagger passenger loading and unloading to maintain social distancing
- Have staff on hand to assist with adherence when loading and unloading
- Consider discontinuing or altering vehicle services if demand for transportation leads to overcrowding at stops and an inability to maintain proper distancing between groups.

Transportation System Modifications

Transportation system operators should consider the following vehicle and facility modifications/improvements as COVID-19 prevention measures:

- Install a clear, protective barrier (e.g. plexiglass) between the vehicle operator and the passengers
- Section off the area between the driver and passengers with tape or other material

- Install hard, non-porous seating covers to allow for easy disinfection (if the seating surfaces are currently soft and porous)
- Provide “hand hygiene stations” at shuttle stops, terminals, and waiting areas. This may include temporary handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer dispensers
- Improve conveyance ventilation (e.g., keep windows open, install enhanced air-handling systems).

Vehicle Cleaning Requirements (minimum standard)

Regular cleaning and disinfecting of vehicles is necessary to protect visitors and vehicle operators. The CDC guidelines for cleaning must be adopted:

- Abide by CDC cleaning and disinfecting guidelines as the minimum standard for cleaning.
 - [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
 - [Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles](#)
- If there is a known case of a passenger or operator with COVID-19, temporarily remove the vehicle from circulation and follow CDC guidelines for cleaning.

Guidelines Pertaining to Operators

Appropriate engineering and administrative controls provide drivers/operators with protection from exposure to the virus. Drivers/operations must do the following:

- Self-screen for symptoms daily before starting work per the [DOI Workplace Safety Plan](#)
- Wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth and is in accordance with current CDC and OSHA guidance.

Transportation system operators should consider implementing the following COVID-19 prevention measures:

- Take caution in assisting with boarding as to avoid contact with passengers. Drivers/operators may be asked to assist seniors and those with disabilities in boarding the vehicle
- Leave a space of six feet between the operator and passengers unoccupied
- Maximize airflow through cabin (e.g. keep windows open).

Should an operator or transportation system employee exhibit [symptoms of illness consistent with COVID-19](#), they must immediately notify their supervisor. Refer to [NPS guidelines](#) and [CDC guidelines](#) on actions necessary for those that fall ill.

Communications

Due to significant operational changes, communicating to visitors on adjustments to park policies related to COVID-19 is important. Transportation system operators should consider the following communication tactics:

- Employ multiple communication formats including park signage, public website, social media, and Highway Advisory Radio.

- Communicate internally to employees to encourage them to follow CDC guidelines including staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, not touching face with hands, maintaining social distancing, and good hand hygiene.

Developing a COVID-19 Management Plan

Transportation system operators should develop a plan that applies appropriate COVID-19 management practices including from those outlined above, to meet federal requirements, CDC guidelines, additional direction from park management, and operator company policy. The transportation system operator must work with the park Superintendents to review the plan and address specific park needs. Superintendents are encouraged to allow flexibility in how transportation operators design their policies and practices to address the specific transportation operation needs, provided that they meet the applicable federal requirements. Park Superintendents may, based on application of the park risk assessment tool and transportation system design and operation, adopt state and local requirements or guidance that is more stringent than the federal requirements and guidelines through an administrative order.

Resources

Source	Title and Hyperlink
DOI	Pandemic Social Distancing and Daily Health Monitoring Implementation Guidelines for Department of the Interior (DOI) and Work Locations
NPS	Self-Screening Guidance to Minimize COVID-19 Infection for Employees Entering the Workplace Mask Wearing Guidance for Partners Risk Assessment Tool
CDC	Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19 Disinfecting Your Non-Emergency Vehicle Guidance Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes What To Do If You Are Sick COVID-19 Symptoms and Screening Use Masks to Slow the Spread of COVID-19 Communications
Industry Groups	The American Public Transit Association COVID-19 Resource Hub Passenger Vessel Association COVID-19 Response & Resources