



Economic Benefits of Transportation Investment

FEDERAL LANDS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FACT SHEET

National parks attract over 300 million annual visitors who spend billions of dollars and support thousands of jobs in neighboring communities. Transportation systems support this relationship by connecting visitors and employees to parks and nearby communities. Transportation investments maintain access and promote economic prosperity.

Visitors to national parks rely on an extensive, multimodal transportation system – roads, bridges, transit systems, front-country trails, and ferries – to access America’s most significant natural and cultural sites. In addition to providing critical access to our nation’s parks, transportation assets are often attractions in their own right.

Transportation investments have direct and indirect economic benefits for surrounding communities. Visitors depend on National Park Service (NPS) transportation systems to access and enjoy national park sites, along with local shops, restaurants, lodging, and other tourist attractions. Road construction and transit services also support economic activity by employing local construction and maintenance labor and vehicle operators. **In 2019, visitors spent an estimated \$21 billion in local gateway regions and supported 341,000 jobs in and around national parks.**

The Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) is the primary fund source for NPS transportation investments. Through Highway Trust Fund appropriations, from 2016–2020, \$284 million will be invested annually into the NPS transportation system.

The Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) provides funds for transportation facilities that are on, adjacent to, or provide access for Federal lands. FLAP supplements State and local resources for eligible public roads, transit, transportation planning, and data collection near high-use recreation sites. An application is required. More information is available at the FLAP web page - highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/programs-access.



Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio draws hundreds of cyclists each season. Bike Aboard! cyclists can bike the Towpath Trail in one direction and return by train (Photo credit: NPS)

Access to and within the National Park System has been a defining experience for generations of visitors. The National Park Service coordinates the planning and implementation of transportation systems that improve the visitor experience and care for national parks by: **1) Preserving natural and cultural resources 2) Enhancing visitor safety and security 3) Protecting plant and animal species 4) Reducing congestion 5) Decreasing pollution.**



After many years of reconstruction, visitors to Glacier National Park's historic Going-to-the-Sun Road will experience an improved roadway surface. (Photo credit: NPS)



Island Explorer buses keep up to 88,000 motor vehicles off the roads of Acadia National Park each year. (Photo credit: NPS)



Denali National Park shuttle buses carry visitors over roads closed to personal motor vehicles. (Photo credit: NPS)

Glacier National Park

The Going-to-the-Sun Road is a National Historic and Civil Engineering Landmark in Glacier National Park. It carries visitors to unparalleled vistas in northwestern Montana. Over 80% of the park's 2.1 million annual visitors travel the roadway. To address roadway deterioration caused by extreme weather conditions, the NPS and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) completed a multi-year collaborative rehabilitation in May 2019. Preventive repairs along the roadway ensure that the roadway can be used and enjoyed by future generations. **In 2019, visitors to Glacier National Park spent an estimated \$356 million and supported approximately 5,400 jobs.**¹

Acadia National Park

Located along the coast of Maine and Mount Desert Island, heavy private vehicle traffic in Acadia National Park can degrade visitor experience and overwhelm local parking lots. In 1999, the Island Explorer bus service began providing visitors with fare-free service among various community resources and park destinations. The partnership is jointly funded by NPS, Federal, local, and private entities. The buses have helped relieve competition for limited parking spaces, and helps local businesses to expand service capacity and support economic growth. **In 2019, visitors to Acadia National Park spent an estimated \$380 million and supported more than 5,470 jobs.**¹

Denali National Park and Preserve

The Denali Park Road is the only road traversing the six-million-acre landscape of Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska. The first 15 miles of this 92-mile roadway are paved and open to noncommercial vehicles. The paved road can quickly become overwhelmed by private vehicle traffic.

To minimize natural resource impacts, the remaining roadway is restricted to bus, bicycle, or access by foot. Bus service (provided through a private concessioner), includes either a shuttle with regular stops or a tour bus with an interpretive feature. Bus ridership accounts for nearly 80% of all trips in the park. An unexpected benefit of decreasing traffic on the roads is the increased frequency of wildlife sightings by visitors. **In 2019, Denali National Park and Preserve generated \$613 million in visitor spending and supported over 7,490 jobs.**¹

¹ C. Thomas and L. Koontz. (2020). 2019 National Park Visitor Spending Effects: Economic Contributions to Local Communities, States, and the Nation. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/EQD/NRR-2020/2110. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>