

TRANSPORTATION

ROADS

Park Roads

Catoctin Mountain Park contains 10.55 miles of hard surface road and 1.4 miles of gravel or dirt roadways. In support of the road system the park maintains two bridges, 50 culverts, 23 drop inlets, 4.86 miles of ditch line and 17 parking areas. (see Appendix B). In winter portions of Park Central and Manahan Roads are closed due to hazardous vehicular travel conditions and to allow for cross-country skiing. Traffic congestion is an issue on peak visitation weekends in good weather.

Scenic Overlooks

At the present time there are no suitable scenic vistas that can be enjoyed by visitors from their vehicles within the park. The park would like to build one scenic overlook accessible by automobile somewhere between Thurmont Vista and Hog Rock at an elevation of 1,550 feet. This overlook would provide a view of the valley looking north towards Sabillasville and Harbaugh Valley. Design and construction would be similar to overlooks found in Shenandoah National Park and along the Blue Ridge Parkway. This would also implement an uncompleted item from the 1965 Master Plan Catoctin Mountain Park.

Tour Buses

In 2006, 4,885 (.07%) visitors arrived at Catoctin Mountain Park in approximately 150 busses. As the population ages that number is projected to rise to as much as 3% annually. Due to the steep grades and seasonal closures Park Central Road is available for bus traffic only from west to east and only during the spring summer, and fall seasons.

<u>Year:</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>
Busses:	150	204	183	142	155
Passengers:	4,885	7,665	6,332	4,457	5,605

Shuttle Buses

Some parks use shuttle systems during peak visitor periods. Probably the first time that Catoctin would use a shuttle system is on peak visitation weekends in the spring or fall. We would probably utilize the type of red bus system currently in use in Glacier National Park.



Glacier shuttle bus. Photo by NPS.

In the 1930s, the National Park Service utilized canvas-topped touring sedans to provide transportation for visitors within national parks. The White Motor Co. built 500 of these touring sedans for Bryce Canyon, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Mt. Rainier, Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Zion National Parks. Glacier's fleet of 33 red with black trim vehicles were built between 1936 and 1938 and refurbished by Ford Motor Company in the last few years. We anticipate that the internal park shuttle would be free to the public. There may also be an opportunity to run a shuttle bus from the hotels in Thurmont to the park on spring wildflower, fall foliage, and Colorfest weekends if there were sufficient visitor interest.

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Railroad Excursions



Maryland Midland Railroad runs along the northern edge of the park and may present opportunities for a scenic railway experience between the Towns of Thurmont and Smithsburg as it parallels Catoctin Mountain Park, and crosses the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and South Mountain State Park.

While many issues including funding require resolution, the park may be able to support this effort with interpretive staff as has been done in other units of the National Park System.

Fall Foliage Excursion Train
Courtesy of Great Smoky Mountains Railroad

Trails

The public trail system of Catoctin Mountain Park has 14 trails totaling 26 miles in total length. Types of trail use include hiking, horseback riding, self-guided interpretation, and cross country skiing. The park maintains one handicapped accessible trail of 0.2 miles in length. Bikes are allowed on park roads but not on trails. Trails are managed in accordance with the Catoctin Mountain Park Trails Management Plan.

Most of the current trail system does not have any external connections to larger trail systems or major population centers. The current Catoctin Trail extends for 26 miles through four local, state, and federal parks but fails to connect with the 2,170 mile long Appalachian National Scenic Trail which exists less than two miles from the current northern terminus of the Catoctin Trail.

Limited sight distances and narrow road shoulders will require a road-separated trail corridor for hiking and bicycling along Route 77 from Thurmont to at least the Appalachian Trail corridor. There are land acquisition, design, and environmental compliance issues that would need to be addressed given the narrow road corridor, proximity to Big Hunting Creek, and steep slope constraints. Route 550 has similar constraints with the Owens Creek stream corridor and numerous design and easement acquisition issues.

The Frederick County Board of Commissioners adopted a Bikeways and Trails Plan in 1999, which proposes a countywide network of on-street bikeways and off-street trail corridors with countywide significance. Connections to both the Catoctin Trail and the Appalachian Trail are proposed as part of that plan.



Brown's Farm Trail.
Photo by NPS.



Bicycles on Route 77, Photo by NPS.