



TODAY

Grandeur can be marred, and tangible influences can thwart intangible rewards. At present, on a visit to the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park during the peak season or on busy holidays, vacationing visitors can endure long lines at the entrance station and an endless chain of traffic once inside the park. Indeed, after entering the park, often visitors do not find the silence and solitude that one would hope for or expect from Grand Canyon. Actually, many visitors struggle to find a parking space. Frequently their visit is accompanied by the cacophony of automobile engines and horns and the constant growl and screech and smoke of bus motors and brakes. A parking lot, even at the Grand Canyon, is still a parking lot, with all the fumes and conflicts and fender-benders.



BUS SHUTTLE



BUS SHUTTLE

TOMORROW

Grand Canyon National Park's General Management Plan was approved in 1995. A major component of that plan is expansion of the existing South Rim transit system, which will allow the National Park Service to meet current and projected visitation pressures. This expanded transit system will include service between a parking lot north of the town of Tusayan and Mather Point, service west to Hermits Rest and east to Desert View, and service within Grand Canyon Village. The goal of the transit system is to provide more convenient access to the park than is now experienced, using a combination of parking, public transit, and an expanded pedestrian/bicycle trail system. Operating schedules will be established to deter long lines and waiting times, and routes will be devised to meet the needs of visitors once they have chosen how to see the park. The transit system will operate daily all year, from early morning to late evening and will be supplemented by an overnight taxi service (for a fee).

Day visitors to the Grand Canyon Village area will leave their cars outside the park and ride the transit system into the park. Visitors with overnight accommodations will drive into the park to a designated parking area for their room or at their campsite. Visitors will then utilize the transit system to visit the South Rim developed areas. Highway 64 / Desert View Drive will remain open to through traffic and will also be served by transit buses.

Transit Stations: There will be three main transit stations:

- Grand Canyon Transit Center at a parking lot north of Tusayan
- Canyon View Information Plaza near Mather Point
- Village Transit Center near the future Heritage Education Campus

Visitors will be offered basic park information before boarding the transit system at Grand Canyon Transit Center (north of Tusayan). At Canyon View Information Plaza, visitors will be only a short distance from the rim for their first view of the Grand Canyon, be able to review a menu of activities available at the park, become introduced to the park's educational themes, and learn more about the transit system that will take them to their desired locations. From the Village Transit Center, extensive educational exhibits and other visitor services will be immediately available at the future Heritage Education Campus.

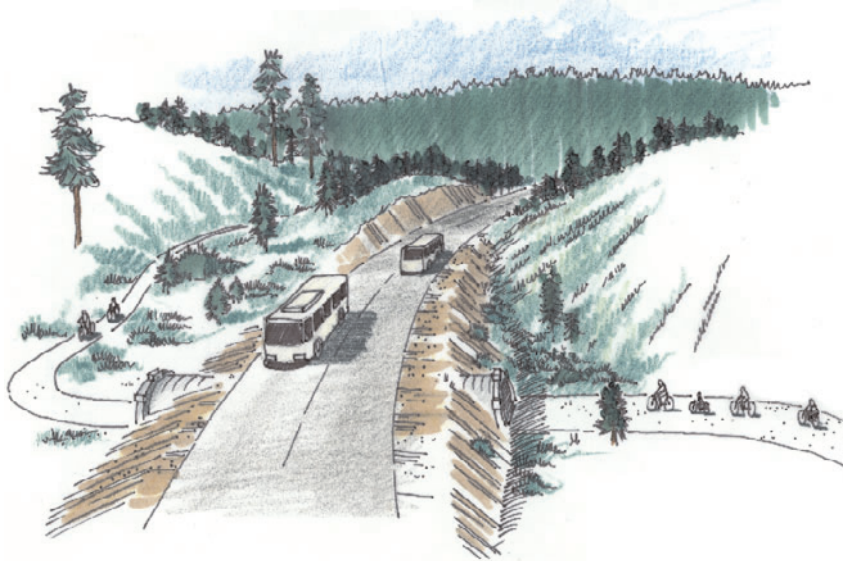
Needs for Mobility Impaired Visitors: All transit vehicles will be accessible to visitors with mobility impairments. At Canyon View Information Plaza, electric carts will transport mobility impaired visitors to and from the rim. Wheelchairs will be available.

Parking: Day-use parking for visitors to Grand Canyon Village will be at the Grand Canyon Transit Center. There will be additional limited day-use parking at Desert View. Parking will eventually be removed at Mather Point, El Tovar Hotel, Bright Angel Lodge, and in the railroad yard area of Grand Canyon Village Historic District. Parking along Desert View Drive will be restricted. Overnight guests will park at the designated parking area for their room or at their campsite.

Buses: Shuttle bus stops will be located throughout the Village, to the west on Hermit Road, and to the east along Desert View Drive. Buses will be low floor and as clean-burning and quiet as is practical and affordable. Bicycles, wheelchairs, and strollers will be accommodated by the buses.

Grand Canyon Greenway: A 45-mile multi-use trail system on the South Rim will provide an opportunity for those who wish to walk or bicycle to get around the park. The Greenway will parallel the transit system from Hermits Rest to Desert View and south to Tusayan, with a hub at Canyon View Information Plaza.

Rim Access: Access to the rim at Canyon View Information Plaza will be by walking or electric cart (for mobility impaired visitors). The Greenway will provide additional rim access, and shuttle buses will stop at overlooks to the east and west. Shuttles will serve



South Rim trailheads, although parking at some Desert View Drive trailheads (Grandview, Hance, and Tanner, for example) will still be available to overnight hikers. Highway 64 / Desert View Drive to the east of the Village will remain open to traffic, however parking will not be provided at overlooks (except at Desert View). Access to Desert View Drive overlooks will be restricted to passengers in tour vehicles and shuttle buses and to visitors using the Greenway.

STATUS AND BACKGROUND

GRAND CANYON SOUTH RIM TRANSIT

- Over the past year (2000), two trends have converged to require a re-evaluation of the park's transit system decisions. The first trend is the continuing lack of growth in visitation to Grand Canyon National Park – from 1994 through 1999, annual visitation to the park had grown at an average rate of about 0.8% per year, this rate was lower than anticipated. The second trend is the increase in capital costs for the light rail project. Combining increased capital costs with reduced visitation projections made the projected cost at the turnstile rise to levels the NPS, and the public, may not have been willing to accept.
- In November 2000, the National Park Service was asked by Congressman Ralph Regula (R-OH), Chairman of the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee for a briefing on the transit system. That briefing was held in the park on Thursday, November 30, 2000. The briefing included a look at the proposed light-rail transit system, Canyon View Information Plaza, and the site of the proposed Grand Canyon Transit Center north of Tusayan. The Congressional Delegation attending the meeting was supportive of a mass transit system for Grand Canyon National Park, but suggested that there may be merit in an interim bus-only alternative until visitation warrants a higher capacity system.
- The National Park Service will evaluate and report to Congress later this year (2001) on bus-based transit systems. The Report to Congress will examine whether bus alternatives will permit the system to be sized for smaller demand at the start and grow to accommodate the higher demand eventually expected. The Report will not consider any proposed system to be temporary, but rather a series of phases leading to a system capable of the capacity envisioned in the light rail proposal.
- The National Park Service issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ - Phase I Prospectus) on August 19, 1999. This RFQ solicited responses from potential transit providers demonstrating their qualifications to bid on the upcoming contract to finance, construct, operate, and maintain a multi-modal transit system at Grand Canyon. Seven responses were received, and a “short list” of five qualified potential bidding teams, comprising over forty of the largest and most respected companies in the transit industry, was announced in mid-January 2000. The next step was expected to be the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the bus and light rail system. The RFP has been put on hold pending the Report to Congress.
- Canyon View Information Plaza, the northern terminus of the transit system and visitor orientation center near the canyon rim, opened October 26, 2000 and is currently being served by the park's free shuttle bus system.
- An integral component of the park's overall transit system, Market Plaza Road, was opened on December 2, 1999. The opening of Market Plaza Road marked completion of the first phase of Canyon View Information Plaza. This road provides resident, business, and visitor access into the business center, Trailer Village, Mather Campground, and Yavapai Lodge and is a key component in the shift to mass transit.
- In 1998, Congressman Ralph Regula requested information on how the National Park Service decided on light rail as the mode for the primary route of the transit system. The Federal Transit Administration, with assistance from Grand Canyon National Park, prepared a report on

that decision-making process. The report was submitted to Congress in May 1999. The report concluded that the information reviewed provided strong evidence that the National Park Service has developed its proposal for transit service through a sound and thorough planning process, including satisfactory analysis of transit alternatives and meaningful public involvement.

- The southern terminus of the system will be outside park boundaries, on U.S.D.A. Forest Service lands. A Record of Decision, signed by the Regional Forester, was announced in August 1999, and allows for use of Forest Service lands for a transit staging area (Grand Canyon Transit Center) through a special use permit.
- In November 1997, following the completion of an Environmental Assessment (EA) the National Park Service selected a combination of light rail and alternative fuel buses as the future transit system to and within the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. The EA described the proposal to construct the Mather Point orientation/transit center and transit system with a southern terminus at a gateway facility in Tusayan and analyzed three transportation alternatives, ranging from buses to a light rail system.
- A Visitor Transportation System (shuttle bus) was introduced at Grand Canyon in 1974, and has provided over 50 million rides to park visitors during the busiest seasons. The system began year-round operations in March 2000. Operational funds for the Visitor Transportation System, supplemented by transit entrance fees, are currently at about \$3.5 million annually.
- Grand Canyon National Park has converted half of its existing diesel shuttle bus fleet to alternative fuels. In 1996, the fleet consisted of 14 diesel buses and ten trailers. Currently the fleet consists of three electric buses, eleven diesel buses and 12 natural gas buses, ten trailers, and the fueling/charging/maintenance infrastructure to support them.

