



**FOREST SERVICE HANDBOOK  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (WO)  
WASHINGTON, DC**

**FSH 7709.55 – TRAVEL PLANNING HANDBOOK**

**CHAPTER 10 – TRAVEL PLANNING PROCESS**

**Amendment No.:**

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**Posting Instructions:** Amendments are numbered consecutively by Handbook number and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this Handbook was xx09.xx-xx-x to xxxxx.

<b>New Document</b>	7709.55, Chapter 10	9 Pages
<b>Superseded Document(s) by Issuance Number and Effective Date</b>	7709.55, Chapter 10	5 Pages

**Digest:**

7709.55 – Changes title from “Transportation Planning Handbook” to “Travel Planning Handbook.”

10 – Removes direction on regional transportation planning in its entirety and replaces it with direction on the travel planning process, consistent with the travel management rule at 36 CFR Part 212 and revised FSM 7710.

10.01 – Adds a cross-reference to the definitions in FSM 7710.05.

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**Digest Continued:**

10.02 – Adds objectives for travel planning, including focusing travel planning to minimize gridlock, avoiding unnecessary inventory, and collaborating with State, local, and tribal governments and the public in the designation process.

10.03 – Adds policy on the six-step process to guide designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use.

11 – Adds discussion of existing travel management direction.

11.1 – Adds direction to compile existing travel management decisions, review State motor vehicle codes and applicable local laws, and coordinate with law enforcement agencies and personnel. Provides direction for units or Districts with established designations.

11.2 – Adds explanation of the relationship of land management plans to travel management decisions.

11.3 – Adds provisions for incorporation of existing travel management decisions into designations made pursuant to 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B.

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11.4 – Adds requirement to identify the jurisdiction over forest transportation facilities and to coordinate with Federal, State, county, and local authorities to resolve uncertain or disputed jurisdiction over a forest transportation facility.

**Digest Continued:**

12 – Adds discussion of information needs for travel analysis and travel management decision-making.

12.1 – Adds requirements for identifying roads, trails, and areas for consideration for designation.

13 – Adds discussion of travel analysis from FSH 7709.55, chapter 20, and its relation to travel management decisions. Travel analysis should result in proposals to change travel management direction, which should be evaluated through the environmental analysis process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Travel analysis itself does not yield decisions.

14 – Adds direction on conducting necessary environmental analysis and decision-making and on adequate preparatory work for the NEPA process.

15 – Adds requirement to identify designated roads, trails, and areas on a motor vehicle use map.

15.1 – Adds requirement to establish road and trail management objectives.

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15.2 – Provides direction on the information that must be displayed on the motor vehicle use map and the source of the data. Requires national consistency in content, presentation, and data, and provides for continued use of visitor maps, travel maps, and recreation opportunity maps.

**Digest Continued:**

16 – Requires public education and enforcement of designations and monitoring of motor vehicle use.

16.1 – Adds cross-references to EM 7100-15 and FSM 7716.42.

16.2 – Discusses the importance of effective enforcement of designations and public education.

16.3 – Discusses the link between monitoring and revision of designations.

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This chapter amplifies direction on travel planning and designation in FSM 7710.

### **10.01 – Definitions**

See FSM 7705 and 7710.5 for definitions of terms used in this chapter.

### **10.02 – Objectives**

1. Tightly focus travel management decisions to minimize gridlock. For many National Forests, designation of routes and areas for motor vehicle use will result in a shift from cross-country motor vehicle use to a system of routes and possibly areas designated for motor vehicle use. For other National Forests, route and area designation will simply confirm travel management decisions that have already been made. Reconsideration of the entire forest transportation system is not required (FSM 7715.1).

2. Avoid unnecessary inventory. Travel analysis must be based on a complete and accurate inventory of National Forest System (NFS) roads, NFS trails, and designated areas. However, a complete inventory of user-created routes is not necessary.

3. Collaboration with State, local, and tribal governments and the public is critical to the designation process. Involve governmental agencies and the public early and throughout the designation process to engender trust, credibility, and coordination and to provide an integrated system of designated routes and areas.

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**10.03 – Policy**

Use the following six-step process to guide designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use under 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B (see Ex. 01).

1. Compile existing travel management direction.
2. Assemble resource and social data.
3. Use travel analysis to identify proposals for change.
4. Conduct necessary environmental analysis and decision-making.
5. Identify designated routes and areas on a motor vehicle use map.
6. Implement, monitor, and revise.

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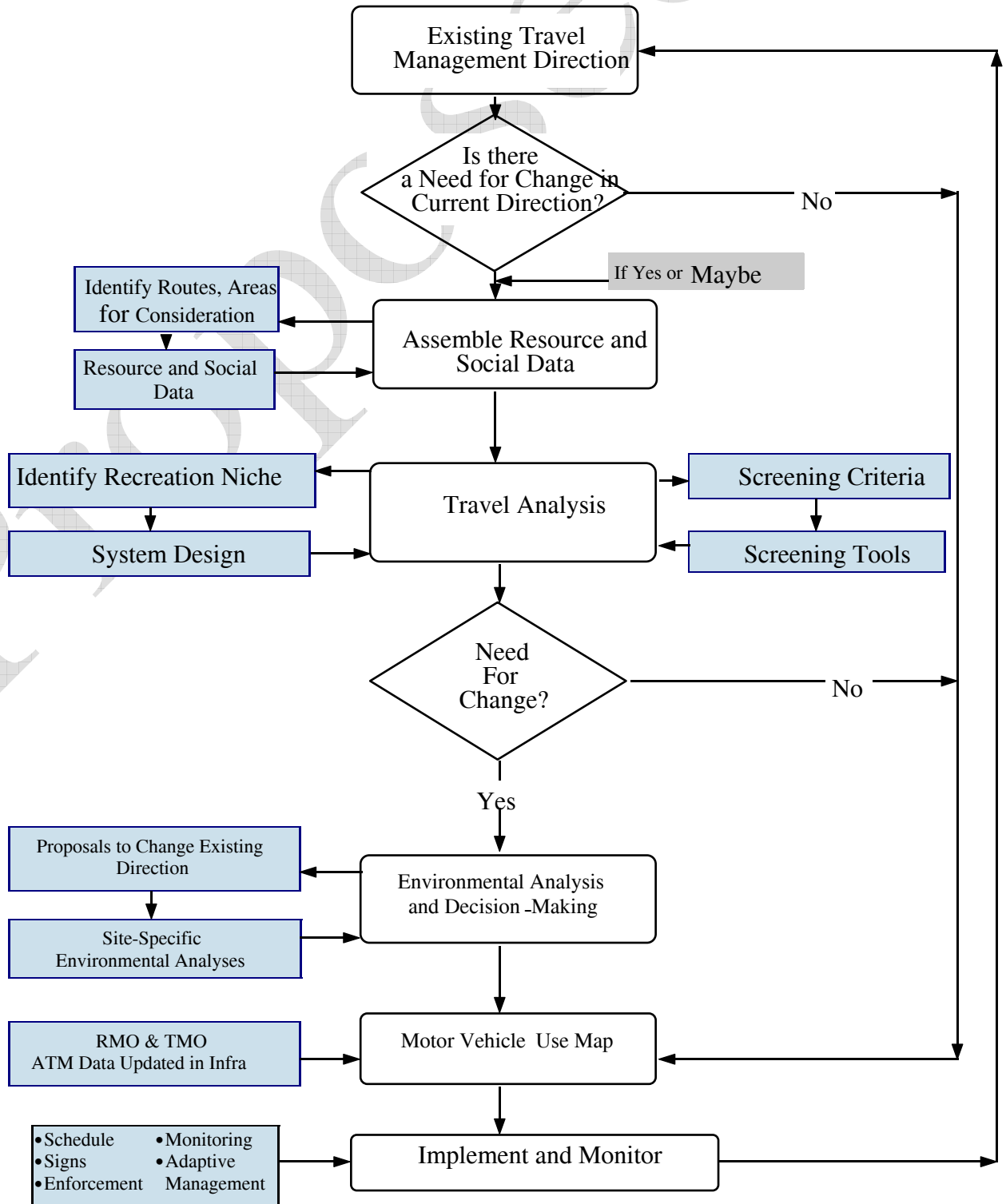
**10.03 – Exhibit 01**

**The Travel Planning Process**

Proposed



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## **11 – COMPILE EXISTING TRAVEL MANAGEMENT DIRECTION (STEP 1)**

Existing travel management direction reflects each National Forest's history of travel planning, occupancy and use, road and trail construction, and past decisions, including those contained in the applicable land management plan. Some National Forests have recently completed travel management decisions with extensive public participation.

### **11.1 – Baseline System**

1. Consolidate existing direction on travel management into a single location. This step should not create new direction. Rather, this step involves compiling past decisions that guide motor vehicle use, including maps, road and trail management objectives for NFS roads and NFS trails on the administrative unit or Ranger District (FSM 7714), and monitoring reports.

2. Carefully review State vehicle codes and applicable local laws regarding motor vehicle operation, licensing and registration, safety, and motorized mixed use. Consult with Law Enforcement and Investigations staff and coordinate with affected State and local law enforcement agencies involved in traffic enforcement for the affected area. Traffic on roads is subject to State traffic laws except when in conflict with designations established under 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B, or with the rules at 36 CFR Part 261. Whether motorized mixed use is allowed on an NFS road is determined by State traffic law or local ordinances, unless it conflicts with the designation for that road established under 36 CFR 212.51.

3. If existing travel management decisions for a unit or District restrict motor vehicle use (other than over-snow vehicle use and other exempted uses) to the designated system, the

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existing decisions may, with public notice but no further analysis or decision-making, be identified on the motor vehicle use map.

## **11.2 – Land Management Plans**

1. Land management plans are strategic documents. They establish desired conditions and objectives, identify the suitability of land for various uses, and describe guidelines for resource protection (FSM 1920). Approval of a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision typically does not include a final decision designating roads, trails, or areas for motor vehicle use or restricting motor vehicle use. Rather, the land management plan provides information and guidance for travel management decisions.

2. Travel management decisions are project-level decisions. They must be consistent with land management plans (FSM 7712.2).

3. Some land management plans prepared under the 1982 planning rule include travel management decisions as plan standards. Units should generally avoid including travel management decisions in land management plans prepared under the 2005 planning rule. If travel management decisions are approved simultaneously with a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision, these final decisions must be accompanied by appropriate environmental analysis. Travel management decisions in land management plan standards under the 1982 planning rule are part of the existing travel management direction for an administrative unit or a Ranger District.

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### **11.3 – Existing Travel Management Decisions**

1. The regulations at 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B, do not require reconsideration of previous travel management decisions.
2. Many National Forests have NFS roads and NFS trails that are in effect already designated for the uses for which they are currently managed. All National Forests, for example, have NFS roads managed as open to highway-legal vehicles (generally NFS roads classified at Operational Maintenance Levels 2 through 5). These roads are in effect already designated for use by highway-legal vehicles.

### **11.4 – Jurisdiction Over a Forest Transportation Facility**

1. Identify jurisdiction over forest transportation facilities. The designation process applies only to NFS roads and NFS trails. Some forest roads and trails are State, county, or municipal routes authorized by legally documented rights-of-way. While the Forest Service may have some authority to regulate use of these roads and trails to protect NFS lands, these routes are not subject to designation under 36 CFR 212.51.
2. When jurisdiction over a forest transportation facility is uncertain, coordinate with Federal, State, county, and local public road authorities and consult with the Office of the General Counsel. Legal research and title searches may sometimes be necessary to establish jurisdiction over a forest transportation facility.

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## **12 – ASSEMBLE RESOURCE AND SOCIAL DATA (STEP 2)**

1. Travel analysis and travel management decisions require information about use patterns, natural resource conditions, user demand, and social and economic interactions. Gather only the information necessary to make informed travel management decisions. Travel management decisions should not generally require an exhaustive inventory of user-created routes.

2. The public, including user groups, may be a valuable source of information. Public participation at this stage may include sharing information about user-created routes, joint collection of resource data, and collaborative learning about natural resource impacts. An open public process can increase understanding about travel management issues and set the stage for successful collaborative decision-making.

### **12.1 – Identifying Roads, Trails, and Areas for Consideration**

1. The baseline for travel analysis and travel management decisions includes a complete inventory of NFS roads and NFS trails managed for motor vehicle use. This inventory must include maps, as well as information on the authorized uses and characteristics of each route. Much of this information should be contained in the applicable forest transportation atlas.

2. Administrative units should establish a process for identifying any user-created routes that should be considered in travel analysis. A complete inventory of user-created routes is not required. However, appropriate consideration should be given to user-created routes, based on their potential contribution to the forest transportation system. Information about these routes may be useful in evaluating social and environmental impacts of designation.

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**13 – USE TRAVEL ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE (STEP 3)**

1. Travel analysis (FSH 7709.55, ch. 20) provides a comprehensive view of the road and trail network across a broad landscape, before travel management decisions are proposed. Some travel management issues (such as response to user demand, open road density, and other wildlife issues) should be considered at the broad scale, while other issues (such as potential conflicts among uses on a particular trail and mitigation measures for a particular stream crossing) are best evaluated at a smaller scale. Travel analysis is often the point where broad-scale issues can be identified. Site-specific issues are addressed at the project level (FSH 7709.55, sec. 14).

2. Travel analysis should form the basis for proposed travel management decisions, which will be evaluated through the NEPA process. These may include proposals to add user-created routes to the forest transportation system, proposals to establish or change prohibitions or restrictions on motor vehicle use, and proposals to change motor vehicle use on NFS roads and NFS trails. Travel analysis does not itself produce these decisions. If no need for change is identified from travel analysis, and if existing direction already restricts motor vehicle use (other than use by over-snow vehicles and other exempted uses) to designated routes, the responsible official may, with public notice and no further analysis or decision-making, identify the designated routes on the motor vehicle use map.

3. The first two steps in the travel planning process overlap with several of the steps in the travel analysis process (FSH 7709.55, ch. 20). This overlap is intentional and should provide responsible officials with flexibility in determining the necessary scale and scope of travel

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planning. These two six-step processes are not intended to be rigid. Responsible officials should design these processes to meet local needs.

**14 – CONDUCT NECESSARY ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND DECISION-  
MAKING (STEP 4)**

1. Proposed travel management decisions (FSH 7709.55, sec. 13) are subject to NEPA and other environmental laws. Forest Service NEPA procedures are found in FSM 1950.
2. If motor vehicle use is not restricted to a designated system, propose such a restriction and conduct appropriate environmental analysis and documentation.
3. Conduct any necessary travel analysis before beginning the NEPA process for a proposal to change current travel management direction. Avoid duplication by incorporating relevant information from travel analysis into site-specific environmental analysis, documentation and decision-making.

**15 – IDENTIFY DESIGNATED ROUTES AND AREAS ON A MOTOR VEHICLE USE  
MAP (STEP 5)**

1. The motor vehicle use map (36 CFR 212.56) completes the designation process. The prohibition on motor vehicle use off the designated system (36 CFR 261.13) goes into effect and is enforceable when designated routes and areas are identified on a motor vehicle use map.
2. A motor vehicle use map must cover an entire administrative unit or Ranger District (36 CFR 212.1). If environmental analysis in step 4 is conducted at a smaller scale (such as at

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the scale of a watershed), do not publish a motor vehicle use map until designation supported by the requisite environmental analysis is complete for the entire Ranger District or administrative unit.

3. Motor vehicle use maps are generated from the Forest Service's tabular (Infra) and geospatial (GIS) data.

4. A motor vehicle use map for an administrative unit or a Ranger District may be displayed on more than one sheet of paper. If the map covers a broad geographic area or the route density is high, a single page may not be able to display the detail necessary to identify designated routes and areas. A motor vehicle use map may include as many pages at whatever scale is necessary to identify accurately and completely the designated roads, trails, and areas of the administrative unit or Ranger District.

### **15.1 – Road and Trail Management Objectives**

1. Road management objectives (RMOs) (FSM 7714 and 7731) and trail management objectives (TMOs) (FSM 7714) are direction for day-to-day management of an NFS road or an NFS trail based on travel management decisions. Therefore, establishing RMOs and TMOs is not a separate travel management process and does not involve additional decision-making.

2. An RMO sets forth the intended purpose of an NFS road. An RMO enumerates design, operation, and maintenance criteria and documents traffic management strategies for each vehicle class allowed on an NFS road (FSM 7731). An RMO also documents forest orders and permits associated with the road.



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3. A TMO documents the managed uses, Designed Use, prohibited uses, and applicable design parameters, such as clearing width, tread width, and grade, for an NFS trail.

### **15.2 – Motor Vehicle Use Map**

1. A motor vehicle use map identifies and displays those roads, trails, and areas designated for motor vehicle use on an administrative unit or a Ranger District. Routes not designated for motor vehicle use (such as non-motorized trails, unauthorized roads and trails, and temporary roads and trails) must not be shown on a motor vehicle use map.

2. Use linked Infra data and GIS spatial data to produce a motor vehicle use map.

3. A motor vehicle use map must reflect nationally consistent content, presentation, and data requirements and must be available electronically. Once designation for an administrative unit or a Ranger District is complete, users and other interested parties should be able to retrieve the applicable motor vehicle use map from the unit's or District's website (FSM 7711.3).

4. National Forests may continue to use visitor maps, travel maps, or recreation opportunity maps as their primary tools for communicating recreation opportunities to visitors.

### **16 – IMPLEMENT, MONITOR, AND REVISE (STEP 6)**

Implementation of travel management decisions requires effective public education, enforcement, and monitoring. Information from all of these initiatives will help determine whether designations should be revised.

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### **16.1 – Signs**

Guidance on signing is found in EM 7100-15, “Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service.” Signs should complement the applicable motor vehicle use map (FSM 7716.42).

### **16.2 – Enforcement**

Enforcement of 36 CFR 261.13 and 36 CFR 261.14 should be targeted and effective, with a sufficient field presence by qualified forest protection officers, law enforcement officers, and other agency law enforcement personnel, consistent with availability of resources. Public education, route design, and traffic management strategies can complement law enforcement and reduce the number of violations.

### **16.3 – Monitoring**

1. Monitoring involves the following types of activities:
  - a. Implementation Monitoring. Evaluating consistency with the applicable land management plan and compliance with travel management decisions, including any required mitigation measures.
  - b. Validation Monitoring. Verifying assumptions and models used in travel analysis and environmental analysis.
  - c. Effectiveness Monitoring. Evaluating the effectiveness of management and enforcement actions in achieving the desired outcomes of travel management decisions, including restricting motor vehicle use to designated routes and areas.

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- d. Program Monitoring. Tracking and evaluating whether the long-term objectives of travel management for the administrative unit or Ranger District have been achieved.
2. Monitoring can help responsible officials identify the need to change or make new travel management decisions. Changes to the system of routes and areas designated for motor vehicle use may include constructing new routes, closing designated routes to motor vehicle use, or changing designated vehicle classes or seasons of use. Revisions to designations are governed by 36 CFR 212.54. In most cases, these changes (including connected actions and cumulative effects) can be addressed on a site-specific basis and will not trigger reconsideration of decisions governing the entire system of designated roads, trails, and areas on an administrative unit or a Ranger District.