

Transportation Planning

In October 1998 Congress passed *the Transportation Equity Act* for the 21st Century (*TEA-21*) which established the Refuge Roads Program (RR).

TEA-21 requires that all projects funded under the Refuge Roads Program be consistent with the Service's Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP) and step-down management plans.

TEA-21 requires that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) develop by rule a transportation planning process, for each agency, consistent with the metropolitan and statewide planning processes. Agencies are required to have an outreach component in their planning process to assure that under-represented groups have been contacted and provided an opportunity to become involved.

FHWA has put together an internal, preliminary working draft of the proposed rule for comment. We have commented on the various parts of the proposed rule during June – October time period. A working draft will be going out for internal review, legal review and OMB review in December/January.

The Service's refuge planning policy requires that one of the elements to be considered in the development of a CCP are transportation issues, including public use roads and trails, passenger vehicles, pedestrian and bicycle needs, as appropriate for the station.

It is important that every CCP, and every step-down management plan related to public use, have clearly identifiable transportation related planning documentation.

Failure to have clearly identifiable transportation related planning included in a station's plan would result in the station having to develop a separate transportation plan before and refuge roads funding can be approved for road improvements.

Because the development of a separate transportation-planning document would require many of the same steps as a CCP, we have asked FHWA to have our CCP and step-down management plans be considered as meeting the transportation planning requirements under their regulatory process.

Part of the FHWA transportation planning requirements is the opportunity for public comment on all proposed improvements to Service managed public use roads. Refuges will comply with this requirement by posting, on the Refuge System web server, a listing of all RMMS projects proposed for funding with RR funds for the current and following four years.

To boil it down to it's basic elements, the transportation-planning component of CCP will be met by letting the public know how people are going to access Service lands and waters. This would include such information as identifying existing or future roads, parking lots, comfort stations, signage, pedestrian trails and bicycle trails. This will tell the public what transportation access will be and address the intermodal transportation opportunities.

The plan will let people know that the highest priority is the protection of wildlife and their habitat that we will provide safe access for people, that compatibility requirements will be used to evaluate public use.

It also says you will have to have a plan to involve your neighbors (especially those that have been under-represented), involve adjoining agencies, talk to state and local governments (including DOT's), make sure that nothing you plan to do will adversely impact the environment (i.e., air, water), and let people know that the Service will have a process to make sure roads and bridges are safe (inspected and maintained).

It really shouldn't cause much, if any, additional work. Virtually everything that FHWA has in the rules is what FWS is already doing. We just have traditionally separated the information out as a transportation issue. It was always a public use issue.

I think the one issue that we would need to be careful to address is the issue of public use road. Public use roads are those, which are generally open to the public under normal operating conditions. A road open for a specific group under restricted conditions (i.e., hunters with permits for six weeks in the fall) is not a public use road, it would be an administrative road open for a special purpose.

The Service has hired the FHWA to inventory and assess conditions of all Service roads and parking lots open to the public. This information has been provided in hardcopy and/or CD to all refuges. Currently they plan to update and improve the information every 2-3 years.

**Note: For regional contacts and additional information on refuge roads visit:
<http://refuges.fws.gov/roads/index.html>**

Source: Mike Marxen, Region 1 Refuge CCP Planner

National Park and Public Lands Legacy Project: Alternative Transportation System Information

Goals

Implementing transit on federally managed lands can help achieve the following goals:

- Relieve traffic congestion and parking shortages – By providing transit services, fewer vehicles could transport a greater number of visitors to destinations within Federal sites and private vehicle parking spaces would be reduced.
- Enhance visitor mobility and accessibility – Visitor access can be made much easier, and congestion reduced, by implementing trams or shuttle bus service. This enhances the visitor's experience by permitting them to enjoy their site experience rather than concentrating on driving or finding scarce parking spaces. Additionally, transit can provide visitors with disabilities improved access to many sites.
- Preserve sensitive natural, cultural, and historic resources – Transit can reduce parking demands in these areas and limit the amount of foot traffic in an area or locations where foot traffic is allowed.
- Provide improved interpretation, education and visitor information services – At cultural and historical sites, transit can enhance the ability of site personnel to present past events in a logical, sequential manner.
- Reduce pollution – Acquisition of new vehicles, which have much lower emissions than the older vehicle, would improve air quality. Air pollution could be reduced through transit implementation by decreasing the total number of vehicles accessing the sites. New transit vehicles, which operate much more quietly than older vehicles, would limit noise pollution and wildlife disturbance.
- Improve economic development opportunities for gateway communities – Transit services can be used to transport people and their equipment to drop-off and pick-up points, thereby increasing the accessibility of recreational activities. Increasing accessibility through transit can increase the site visitation levels, resulting in additional economic revenues in the local communities through increased use of hotels, restaurants, and other visitor oriented services.

Major Types of Trips

Getting to/from Federal Lands

The “to/from” category covers both short trips (<5 miles) that might connect Federal lands to a nearby gateway community and long trips (>5 miles) that might connect the area to a distant metropolitan area.

All of the bus technologies have potential applicability for the short “to/from” trip except visitor trams, airport apron buses, and motor coaches. The trams/apron buses are not well suited for higher speeds and mixing with other traffic on the public roadways. These vehicles typically have very low floors and a larger width than most bus transit vehicles. The motor coach is the only bus type specifically designed for longer distance travel.

On the rail side, most of the technologies are also suited to the shorter “to/from” trip, although People Mover and Cable Shuttle might be limited to about 2 miles. Conventional passenger rail vehicles, some of which may be self-propelled, are better suited to the longer distance trip.

Travel within Federal Lands

Shuttle trips are for shorter point-to-point connecting trips that might link two major activity areas such as a parking facility with a visitor center. Tour trips, on the other hand, connect a sequence of stops or visitor destinations and might resemble a traditional scheduled, fixed route transit service with frequent on and off activity along the way.

For both the bus and rail/guided categories, nearly all technologies have applicability to the shuttle type of trip. On the longer tour type of trip it appears that the smaller end of the bus spectrum has the most potential applicability (buses with trailers are based on small transit buses). The larger bus types are generally thought to have characteristics that make them less attractive in this use than the smaller vehicles – weight and turning radius - for the tour type of service within Federal lands.

Transit Systems

In general, at sites where transit is feasible and prudent, needs are modest and can be served by a small number of vehicles operating on a seasonal basis.

Human Powered Transit – This type of transit includes walking, hiking, wheelchair use, running, bird-watching, nature interpretation, backpacking, equestrian, nonmotorized human-powered snow uses (i.e., skiing, snowshoeing, etc.). In general provisions for this type of transit are limited to providing a place for it to occur.

Bus Transit – These rubber-tired vehicles are manually operated and typically propelled by conventional internal combustion engines (gasoline or diesel) or alternative fuels such as compressed natural gas. Buses can use existing or improved public roads to or within parks/public lands. Most new alternative transportation systems for federally managed public lands will likely be based on buses.

Types of bus transit vehicles include: tourist trams, vans and van conversions, school buses, small transit buses, historic trolley replicas, standard transit buses, airport apron buses, articulated transit buses, bi-articulated buses, buses with trailers, low floor transit buses, motor coaches, double-decker buses, electric trolley buses.

Waterborne Transit – Waterborne transit systems should be considered wherever there are island areas with limited, if any, access by land. Often waterborne transit can provide more direct and timely access than transit along congested roadways. This type of transit may be particularly useful where major communities are located around the waterways. This type of transit is often used in conjunction with bus transit systems to provide transportation to visitors once they arrive at their destination.

Types of waterborne transit vehicles include: pontoons and skiffs, mono hull vessels, catamarans and hydrofoils.

Snow Transit – Snow transit systems are limited to seasonal situations with adequate snow cover. They have an advantage in not needing to have a maintained roadway to get to their destination.

Types of snow transit vehicles include: snow coaches and snow buses.

Examples of Potential Transit Projects

Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Expand existing bikeways or create new bikeways to increase the opportunity to use a bicycle as a mode of transportation.

Build a link with the regional bikeway.

Connect Federal agency trails to the regional trail system and adjacent community trails.

Build pedestrian paths along tour route to increase safety and encourage pedestrian use.

Federal Lands Transit Systems

Develop or expand the tram system on along the internal tour route.

Increase the period of operation of the tram service.

Developing an on-line reservation system for the tram.

Develop an on-demand shuttle service from the visitor center or other large parking lot to and from the major activity areas.

Schedule regular shuttle service on a loop connecting campsites along the road with major recreational areas.

Purchase of a clean fuel vehicle for the purpose of providing guided tours.

Purchase an enclosed, climate-controlled shuttle for the hot summer months.

Establish a peak season, weekend shuttle system that operates on a fixed schedule between a potential parking lot located in the town and the Federal lands.

Public Transit Systems

Extend public bus routes to the Federal facilities to enhance public access and to increase access by under-served communities. It would be operated frequently enough to afford an attractive alternative to driving for visitors and residents.

Establish a point-to-point shuttle to provide access from town to the Federal lands.

Increased local transit service to the entrance of the Federal facility.

Better connection to the existing and proposed public transit systems.

Combined Federal Lands and Public Transit Systems

Establish a point-to-point shuttle from the community to the federal lands and in-town circulator with a shuttle.

Introduction of a shuttle system from parking areas off the island-to-island activities either by trolley, bus, or ferry.

Establish a bus shuttle beginning in the neighboring city, to the site, around portions of the refuge, and back to city.

Establish a rail transit system tour of the Federal lands (Merritt Island is the only one I know of that might be able to use this but there may be others).

Establish a ferry shuttle to transport visitors between the local area and the Federal lands and to tour wetland areas.

Develop a transit program for transporting visitors from hotels to tourist events.