



Preliminary Alternative Concepts Newsletter

Message from the Superintendent:

Summer is here, and visitation at Zion National Park is skyrocketing at a rate exceeding even recent record-setting years. Over Memorial Day weekend, our busiest weekend, we hosted well over 90,000 visitors. The incredible increase in crowd size supports the need for developing a plan to proactively manage visitation levels to protect park resources and provide the exemplary experiences visitors expect in their national park.

Since our last newsletter in October, we have been busy laying the groundwork for the visitor use management (VUM) plan. This past winter, we completed a workshop where draft preliminary alternative concepts were developed, and we continue to gather key data that will help inform the development of resource indicators and thresholds, visitor capacities, and various management strategies. This spring, we collected transportation data to look at parking capacity and congestion in Zion Canyon during the non-shuttle season. We are working on completing the first phase of a visitor use study at Angels Landing and in the Narrows to assess visitor volumes and use patterns. We are also continuing to engage local, regional, and federal partners in various ways to help us address our visitation issues.

Over 470 people provided comments in response to the initial proposed action included in the October newsletter. I want to thank everyone who took the time to submit comments or attend a public meeting. Your input played a valuable role in developing the preliminary alternative concepts.

This newsletter is the next step in our planning effort and the next opportunity you have to participate in this process.

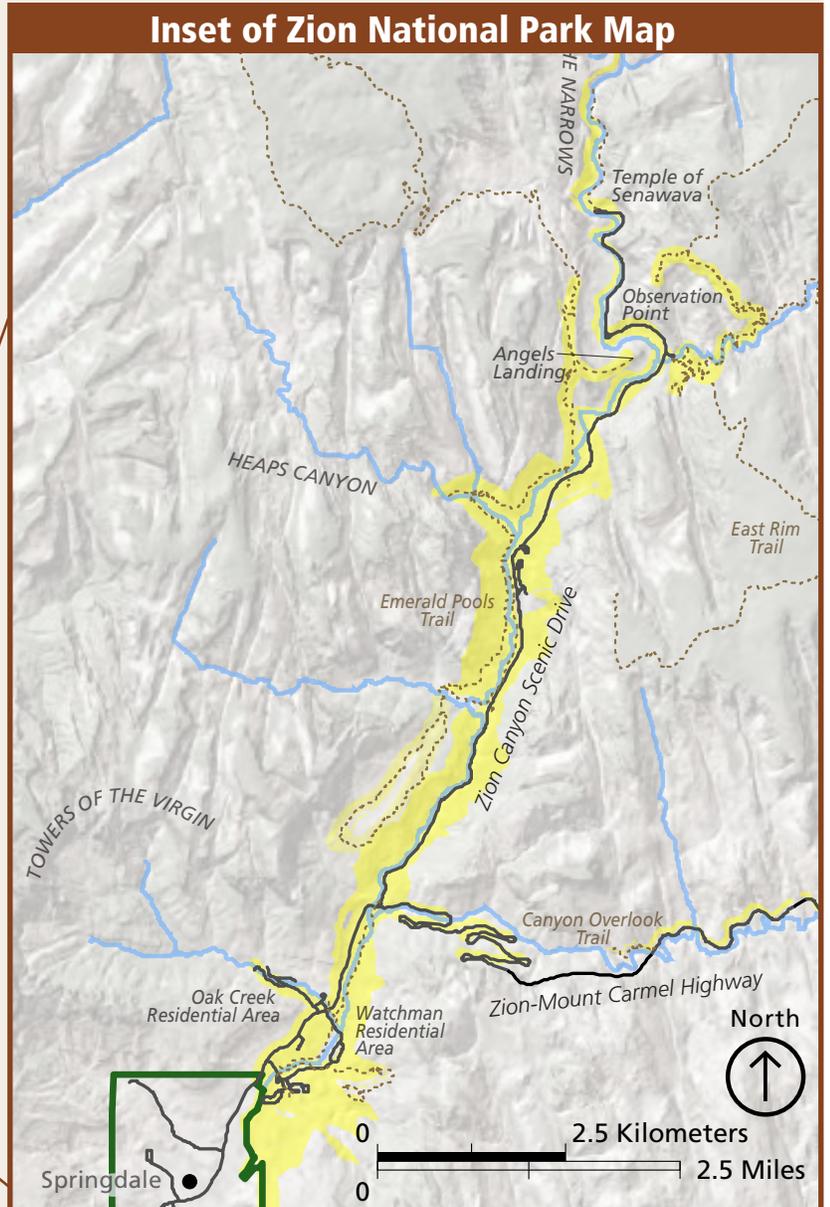
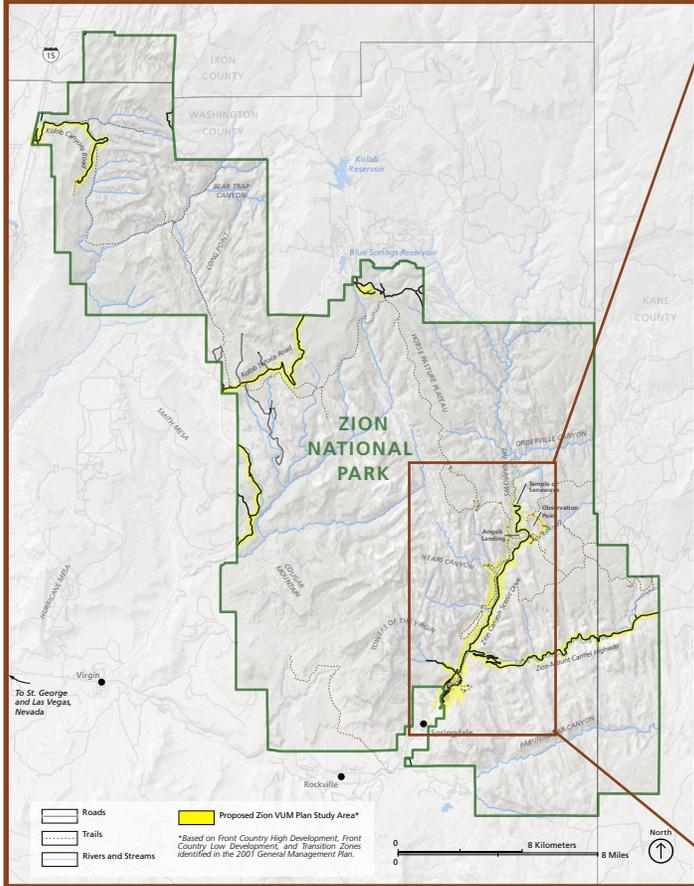
This newsletter describes three alternatives: continuing current management (“no action”) and two preliminary draft alternative approaches for managing visitor use in Zion Canyon and at several other popular destinations, including Zion-Mount Carmel Highway, Kolob Canyons, and Kolob Terrace.

These preliminary alternative concepts may be carried through the draft Zion VUM plan. Please review them carefully and let us know your thoughts regarding the advantages or disadvantages of each. Your comments will help us refine the alternative concepts and help guide us in identifying a preferred alternative.

I want to stress that we have not identified a preferred alternative nor analyzed the impacts of the preliminary alternative concepts at this stage. Once fully developed, one of these alternative concepts could be selected as the National Park Service preferred alternative, or a new alternative could emerge that combines elements from some or all of the preliminary alternative concepts.

Your input in this process will make a difference in ensuring that Zion National Park remains a special place to visit and enjoy, while protecting its unique resources and values for generations to come. Thank you for your interest and participation in the development of the VUM plan. We hope to hear from you soon!

Jeff Bradybaugh, Superintendent
Zion National Park



Why is a Visitor Use Management Plan Needed for Zion National Park?

Zion National Park is one of the most loved units in the national park system. Its scenic canyons attract visitors from around the world, and more and more people want to come and enjoy the park each year. Zion has seen record visitation four of the past five years, with over 4.3 million visitors in 2016 alone. Over the past 10 years, visitation has increased 60 percent. The majority of visitors spend most of their time in Zion Canyon—a six-mile narrow corridor along the Virgin River.

As a result of the continuing increase in visitation, significant crowding and traffic congestion is occurring, even with the park's shuttle system. Visitors are experiencing long lines for basic services. The shuttles are routinely over capacity, with buses that have a capacity of 68 seated riders commonly being filled with between 95 and 100 people. Vehicular traffic is often backing up along roadways into Springdale causing traffic congestion problems there. Trails, campgrounds, and

other visitor infrastructure are seeing wear and tear more quickly and faster than funding allows for repair. The number of emergency incidents rangers must respond to has increased exponentially, and emergency response can be delayed because of traffic congestion. In addition, park managers have observed and recorded increased trampling of vegetation and soil erosion and over 30 miles of visitor-created trails in the Zion Canyon alone.

Given these changes and the likelihood that interest in visiting the park will continue to increase, a plan is needed to determine how to provide a quality, enjoyable, and safe visitor experience while protecting the park's fundamental resources and values. The purpose of the VUM plan is to identify strategies and actions for managing visitor use and access, primarily focused on the park's frontcountry areas—particularly Zion Canyon but also Kolob Terrace and Kolob Canyon—where issues are most acute.

Plan Objectives

The Zion VUM plan is intended to engage the public as Zion National Park advocates and stewards as the National Park Service (NPS) considers strategies that benefit visitors, nearby communities, and the environment. The objectives of the plan include:

- Identify management strategies and appropriate use levels that promote the long-term stewardship of park resources and high-quality visitor experiences.
- Continue to offer visitors high-quality national park experiences that facilitate safe access and opportunities to learn about Zion National Park's fundamental resources and values, while protecting park cultural and natural resources for future generations.
- Provide visitors with multiple opportunities to access park information at various levels and locations.
- Provide an appropriate range of park facilities and services that are commensurate with designated use levels, reduce crowding, and minimize adverse effects to park resources.
- Continue to proactively engage key park partners and stakeholders.



Preliminary Alternative Concepts

Based on the purpose and need for the Zion VUM plan and the above objectives, the National Park Service developed three preliminary alternative concepts that are consistent with the park’s enabling legislation and management zoning and desired conditions outlined in the park’s general management plan (GMP), wilderness stewardship plan, and other related planning direction. The first alternative concept (alternative A) is the “no-action” alternative, which reflects a continuation of current management practices. The other two alternatives are the action alternatives. The action alternative concepts were developed based on public and stakeholder input and feedback, as well as NPS staff expertise. Each represents alternative approaches to visitor use management and reflects the diversity of suggestions received during the scoping process. Please keep in mind that the National Park Service has not yet identified a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative may be one of or a modified version of these alternative concepts.

Visitor Capacity

Another key component of this plan will be the establishment of visitor capacities. Visitor capacities define the maximum amounts and types of use that an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining desired conditions. The park is continuing to collect data that will inform the visitor capacities and is in the early stages of developing visitor capacities. The visitor capacities will be available for public review as part of the draft plan and environmental assessment (see schedule on last page). The visitor capacities will be established based on an analysis of desired conditions, current visitor use information, relevant indicators and thresholds, and potential management strategies. Visitor capacities may vary by season and/or specific areas of the park. They may also vary between the alternatives as different management actions allow NPS managers to accommodate different levels of visitor use.

Alternative A – No Action (Current Management)

Under alternative A, park management would focus on continuation of the management direction established in the general management plan and other relevant park planning guidance. Although park staff would continue to take action to address resource impacts and manage for a quality visitor experience, management would continue to be reactionary, responding as needed, from place to place and situation to

situation. No new holistic, systematic parkwide approach to managing increasing visitor use levels would occur under this alternative. Natural and cultural resources and visitor experience would continue to be degraded especially where high, concentrated, and increasing visitation levels are expected.

Alternative B

In this alternative concept, park managers would take a proactive approach to carrying out desired conditions and management direction established in the general management plan by responding to congestion and crowding in the park’s frontcountry areas through establishment of an online year-round reservation system covering all frontcountry areas— with a reservation, visitors could go to any of the park’s frontcountry areas. The number of reservations issued would be based on frontcountry visitor capacities for the park. By actively managing the number of people in frontcountry areas, this concept is intended to reduce crowding and congestion at popular destinations, improve the visitors’ experience, and reduce impacts that are occurring to park natural and cultural resources. Visitors would need to proactively plan their trip to Zion National Park before they arrive.

Alternative C

In this alternative concept, park managers also would take a proactive response to congestion and crowding in the park’s frontcountry areas, carrying out desired conditions and management direction established in the general management plan, but an online, year-round reservation system would be established for specific sites (heavily used trails, crowded areas) in frontcountry areas in the park. The number of reservations issued would be based on frontcountry visitor capacities for specific trails/areas in the park. In addition, to better protect wilderness character, all day-use hikers entering the wilderness would require a permit that would be obtained through the reservation system. Also like alternative concept B, alternative C is intended to reduce crowding and congestion at popular frontcountry areas, improve the visitors’ experience, and reduce impacts that are occurring to park natural and cultural resources. Because of the need to secure a reservation to access specific frontcountry areas of the park under alternative concept C, visitors would need to carefully plan their trip and specifically where they want to go within Zion National Park well before they arrive at the park.

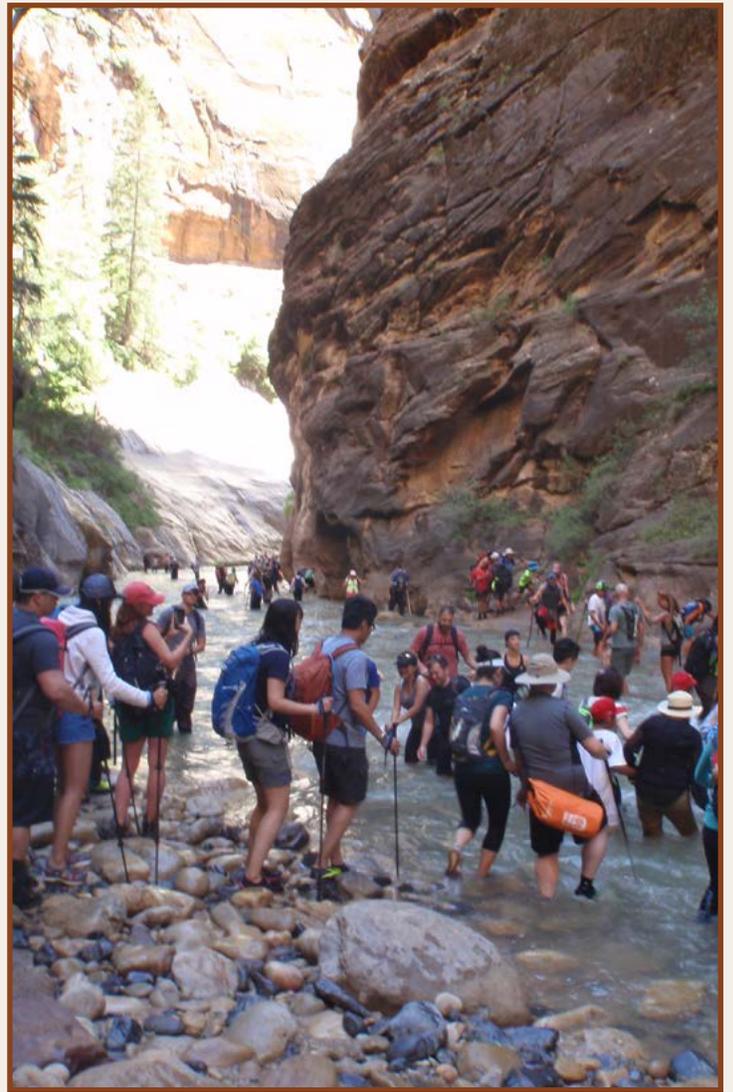


Management Action	Alternative A No Action/Continue Current Management	Alternative B	Alternative C
<p>Visitor Capacity, Permits, and Reservations</p>	<p>No reservations would be required for visitors entering the park. The shuttle system capacity and parking lot capacities would continue to determine how many people could visit popular sites in the park. Zion Canyon would be closed periodically during the non-shuttle season when parking and traffic congestion create safety concerns or unacceptable resource impacts.</p>	<p>An online, year-round reservation system would be instituted for entry into the park and access for all frontcountry areas. The number of reservations issued would be based on frontcountry visitor capacities for the park. The number of parkwide reservations allocated would also vary by season and would consider desired visitor experiences and/or resource conditions based on monitoring of indicator thresholds, the number of parkwide reservations may be adjusted to meet desired visitor experience and/or resource conditions.</p>	<p>An online, year-round reservation system would be instituted for entry into the park and specific sites (trails and other key locations) in frontcountry areas. Visitors could tailor their experiences by selecting specific sites to visit. Visitors would only be able to visit those sites in the park for which they have obtained a reservation. The number of reservations issued would be based on frontcountry visitor capacities for specific trails/areas in the park. Based on monitoring of indicator thresholds, the number of site-specific reservations may be adjusted to meet desired visitor experience and/or resource conditions.</p> <p>Same as alternative B.</p>
	<p>No reservation system would be in place.</p>	<p>The reservation system would be integrated with other park existing or proposed reservation systems (e.g., wilderness permits, campground reservation systems).</p>	<p>Same as alternative B.</p>
	<p>Visitors could continue to drive through the park on Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway after paying their entrance fee.</p>	<p>Visitors driving through the park on the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway or the Kolob Terrace Road and not stopping for extended periods to recreate (e.g., to hike, picnic) would not need a reservation, although a park entrance fee would still be charged.</p>	<p>Same as alternative B.</p>
	<p>Wilderness day use permits would continue to be required for canyoneering and overnight use. Monitoring resource indicators would continue to occur. If desired conditions are not being met or if standards are exceeded, changes in wilderness management could occur.</p>	<p>Same as alternative A.</p>	<p>In addition to canyoneering and overnight use, all day-use hiking into wilderness would require a permit that would be obtained through the reservation system. The number of reservations/permits (visitor capacity) allocated would be based on the visitor experience and resource protection standards identified in the wilderness stewardship plan.</p>
<p>Park Shuttle Operations</p>	<p>Subject to available funds, current frequency of transit service, and months of year, shuttle operation would remain similar to 2017 levels for park and town routes. During high visitor use periods, shuttles would continue to run at overcapacity. Long queues/waits would continue to be the norm during busy seasons/periods. When the shuttles are not operating, visitors would still be able to park at trailheads or other designated parking lots or at paved pullouts. Shuttle bus fleet replacement would continue subject to available funds.</p>	<p>The shuttle system would continue to bring visitors into Zion Canyon. The park shuttle would operate commensurate with determined visitor use capacity levels. Visitors that have secured a park reservation and paid the park entrance fee would be permitted to ride the shuttles. Shuttle frequency, run configurations, and seasons may be altered from 2017 operations. When the shuttles are not operating, visitors would park at trailheads or other designated parking lots or at paved pullouts.</p>	<p>Same as alternative B, although the shuttle frequency, run configurations, and seasons may differ. Visitors that have secured a site-specific reservation and paid the park entrance fee would be permitted to ride the shuttles. The shuttle buses could be configured to take visitors to their reserved site-specific location/trailhead without stopping at other locations or trailheads. When the shuttles are not operating, visitors would park at trailheads or other designated parking lots or at paved pullouts where they have reservations.</p>

Management Action	Alternative A No Action/Continue Current Management	Alternative B	Alternative C
<p>Oversized Vehicles (Includes RVs, motorhomes, tour buses, and travel trailers that require traffic to be stopped when traveling through the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway Tunnel)</p>	<p>Existing size restrictions for oversized vehicles to travel through the Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel would continue. Long queues/waits would continue to be the norm during busy seasons/periods. Based on a recent tunnel capacity study, this trend would be expected to continue. Vehicles that are 11'4" or taller or 7'10" wide or wider would continue to need a tunnel permit (see https://www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/the-zion-mount-carmel-tunnel.htm)</p>	<p>Visitors who plan to travel through the park with an oversized vehicle (e.g., tour bus, motorhome, travel trailer) would be able to go through the tunnel at set periods of time in the morning and evening. The tunnel would be closed to oversized vehicles during the remaining hours of the day. Oversized vehicles would not be allowed to park or line up (i.e., stage) near the tunnel before these times. On the west side of the tunnel, oversized vehicles would not be allowed to stage east of Canyon Junction. On the east side of the tunnel, oversized vehicles would not be allowed to stage within the park. In the future, the park could eliminate all oversized vehicle access, including tour buses, through the tunnel.</p>	<p>Oversized vehicles would not be allowed to travel through the tunnel and would need to enter and exit through the South Entrance station. Enforcement of no oversized vehicles could be implemented in phases to ensure that travelers are aware of restrictions.</p>
<p>Commercial Services and Special Use Permits</p>	<p>Park managers would continue to issue commercial use authorization permits for activities determined to be appropriate (e.g., guided hikes, hiker shuttles, commercial tour buses, and photo workshops). Concession contracts would be issued on a competitive basis for continuation of guest services at Zion Lodge and guided horseback trail ride service per NPS policy and regulation if determined "necessary and appropriate" in future determinations. The Zion Canyon shuttle would be operated through the most appropriate commercial management tool.</p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>As part of a commercial services planning strategy, the park would determine which visitor services are appropriate and necessary as well as the appropriate commercial management tool. Special use permits for one-time events would be considered as part of this process.</p> <p>Commercial providers would be part of the visitor capacity allocation. The park would continue to monitor visitor use to ensure that both commercial and individual users have adequate opportunities to access the park, and park facilities.</p> <p>To help alleviate crowding, current group size limits for some commercial service permitted activities would be adjusted or limited in certain areas (e.g., Angels Landing, the Narrows).</p> <p>The NPS would study the possibility of managing the reservation system, shuttle, campgrounds, and parking through a concession or service contract for access to the park.</p> <p>A scenic shuttle tour could be authorized for Kolob Canyons and could be operated by a commercial permit holder or concession contract. This tour would provide brief stops for scenic viewing but would not provide day-use hiking opportunities.</p> <p>A new fee structure would be implemented for the management of commercial use authorizations.</p>	<p>Same as alternative B.</p>

Management Action	Alternative A No Action/Continue Current Management	Alternative B	Alternative C
<p>Messaging and Information</p>	<p>Park managers would continue to use a variety of methods to provide information to visitors on park conditions and assist in their trip planning. Work would continue on developing and implementing a Zion cell phone app to inform visitors of conditions before they arrive and while they are in the park. Social media would continue to be used to provide visitors with information about parking, peak visitation times, etc. The NPS would continue working with UDOT on use of variable messaging on I-15, US 89, and SR-9 to provide visitors with current information on parking or crowded conditions before they arrive at the park. Park staff would also continue working with local businesses, commercial service providers, and state and local tourism offices on pre-trip planning messages and tools.</p>	<p>Same as alternative A. Visitors would have the opportunity to receive expanded educational messaging on resource protection and Leave No Trace ethics through the online reservation system. Additional information would be provided on park use etiquette, sustainable design/use (e.g., benefits of the shuttle system, electric car charging locations, and recycling tips).</p>	<p>Same as alternative B.</p>
<p>Facilities and Infrastructure — General</p>	<p>No new facilities or infrastructure would be provided except for facilities that have already been approved and funded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The South Entrance improvements project would be implemented (e.g., moving the entrance monument, providing additional traffic lane(s) and fee station(s). • New restroom facilities would be built at the Grotto Picnic Area / West Rim Trailhead, and the East Entrance. • Toilet facilities would be improved at Scout Lookout. • More engineering controls, such as fencing and boulders, would be added along roadsides to prevent vehicles from parking in areas that impede traffic, threaten public safety, or impact resources. • More engineering controls, such as fencing and vegetation, would be added to keep pedestrians on designated trails to protect resources or away from situations threatening to public safety. • Studies would be done on the possibility of adding a path/sidewalk along the road between the nature center and the museum to improve connectivity and address pedestrian safety issues. 	<p>Same as alternative A.</p>	<p>Same as alternative A.</p>

Management Action	Alternative A No Action/Continue Current Management	Alternative B	Alternative C
Facilities and Infrastructure — Kolob Canyons	Further study would be done to improve visitor facilities at Kolob Canyons (e.g., restrooms, visitor contact station, parking, outdoor exhibit area, picnic area, and nature/interpretive trail).	Same as alternative A.	Same as alternative A.
Facilities and Infrastructure — Kolob Terrace Road	No new facilities would be planned for the Kolob Terrace Road. Maintenance or replacement (in kind) of existing facilities would continue.	The park would add short trails and picnic benches to provide scenic views from existing parking areas. The park would also add an informational kiosk at a key location along the road. The NPS would work with private landowners and partners to explore the possibility of a visitor contact station and restrooms in the vicinity of Kolob Terrace Road.	Same as alternative B.
Facilities and Infrastructure — South Campground	The design/engineering phase for the South Campground improvements would continue. Any site improvements would be subject to funding availability. A reservation system would be considered for the South Campground. In the meantime, it would continue to be a first-come, first-served campground.	Same as alternative A. The South Campground would be changed from first-come, first-served to a reservation-only campground. The campground could be managed through a concession contract or by the NPS.	Same as alternative A. Same as alternative B.
Facilities and Infrastructure — Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway and East Entrance	Further study would be done to add an informational kiosk near the East Entrance, as well as adding more permanent restroom facilities along the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway.	An informational kiosk would be added near the East Entrance. The NPS would work with private landowners and partners to explore the possibility of a visitor contact station, restrooms, vehicle parking and/or private transit outside the park near the East Entrance. The park would consider additional, limited permanent restroom facilities along the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway between the East Entrance and the tunnel. The NPS would also consider opportunities for visitors to picnic (pack in/pack out) at key roadside locations by adding benches and picnic tables where appropriate and feasible.	Same as alternative B.
Facilities and Infrastructure — Zion Lodge	Existing transit facilities at the Zion Lodge would be maintained and as is.	Same as alternative A.	Reconfiguring existing transportation facilities in the vicinity of Zion Lodge may be necessary to accommodate shuttle operations with the site-specific reservation system.
Facilities and Infrastructure — Parking	Parking within designated parking areas would continue to be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Additional parking could be added as part of the South Entrance configuration project, depending on available funding.	Some existing parking areas (e.g., visitor center) may need to be modified to accommodate tour buses that are managed through the reservation system. Additional parking could be added as part of the South Entrance configuration project, depending on available funding.	Same as alternative B.



Alternatives and Actions Considered but Dismissed

In developing alternatives for this visitor use management plan, a number of alternatives and management actions were considered by the NPS planning team but eliminated from further detailed evaluation because they either did not meet the stated objectives of the plan to a large degree, could not be implemented for technical or logistical reasons, were not consistent with the purpose or significance of the park, or were outside the scope of the planning effort. The actions and the reasons why they were dismissed are described below.

Timed Entry and Queuing at Park Entrances

Closing portions of the park once a predetermined visitor capacity is reached and simply letting vehicles “queue” and enter the park one-at-a-time is not a viable management option. Under this scenario, lines for vehicles at the South Entrance would become prohibitively long and would likely extend well into the Town of Springdale, further burdening local residents and businesses with traffic congestion and access problems and stressing available infrastructure in town. For those visitors waiting in line at the park pedestrian

entrance and awaiting the departure of other visitors, it is likely that extended lines would contribute to an undesirable visitor experience characterized by crowding issues, social conflict, and sun exposure. Lines for vehicles at the East and Kolob Canyons Entrances also would likely become prohibitively long, with some similar impacts as at the South Entrance in terms of wait times and crowding, limited space for queuing, and traffic congestion. This alternative would likely require an increased law enforcement presence as well.

Time-of-day Congestion Pricing

Congestion pricing is a management tool that incentivizes use (visitation to the park) during those times where it is most affordable—thereby encouraging visitors to enter the park at less crowded times of the day, spreading out visitor use, and managing congestion without increasing supply (visitor capacity). National park units are a public resource, and to the extent possible, should remain affordable to visitors across a range of financial status. Congestion pricing could place unfair financial burdens on some visitors, as price points

during peak visitation times would likely need to be very high to maintain visitor capacity by dissuading park visitors from entering during crowded times through paying a high rate. In addition, fees are based on guidance provided in Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and NPS Recreation Fee Reference Manual (RM22A: Recreation Fee Collection). Congestion pricing could also impact those that had planned and/or have expectations for entering the park on a given day or time. Further complicating this action is the fact that many visitors enter the park with prepaid annual park passes, which could result in additional challenges in terms of setting an appropriate level of pricing on top of costs tied to existing annual park passes.

Setting Preference for Specific User Groups, Activities or Groups of Individuals

National park units are a public resource accessible regardless of specific user/user group affiliations and, as such, are to remain available to the entire spectrum of visitors who desire to visit, experience, and learn about park resources. As a visitor capacity is developed, considerations for how that capacity would be allocated to various users and activities will be made. The NPS Recreation Fee Reference Manual (RM22A: Recreation Fee Collection) states “fees will be collected fairly and equitably, and where administratively and economically feasible.”

Dispersing Use to Other Areas of the Park to Relieve Congestion in Zion Canyon

Over 90 percent of Zion National Park is either recommended or congressionally designated as wilderness. National Park Service Management Policies 2006 state that all categories of wilderness be managed for the preservation of wilderness resources and character. In 2009, over 124,000 acres of Zion National Park was designated as wilderness. Along with recommended wilderness, over 133,000 acres of the park will continue to be a place where nature and its “community of life are untrammelled by man, a place where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” As such, facilitating or managing more intense visitation would not meet management prescriptions for wilderness. In addition, the 2001 GMP, 2007 Wilderness Stewardship Plan, and 2014 Virgin River Comprehensive River Management Plan, direct other areas in the park to be more stringently managed than “frontcountry” and developed areas, such as those within Zion Canyon. Dispersing use to other areas of the park outside of the “frontcountry” areas is not compatible with established management prescriptions or existing laws and regulations.

Expanded Shuttle Service in Zion Canyon

The existing park shuttle system that provides stops to key destinations in Zion Canyon is already operating at peak capacity and often over-capacity. Currently, the park shuttle fleet consists of 39 shuttles and 23 trailers. Shuttles operate daily between early morning and evening hours in the summer between Springdale and the park. Shuttles pick up visitors every 10-15 minutes on average during shoulder seasons and every 3-5 minutes during peak summer hours. In addition, numbers of visitors at destinations served by the park shuttles

are already exceeding the shuttle capacity, as is demonstrated by extended wait times at shuttle stops that may exceed an hour or more during peak periods of the day and busier times of the year. An analysis of the transportation system in 2015 demonstrated with the current trend in visitation the park could not add or financially support enough shuttles to meet the growing demand. Because of these factors, expanding shuttle service in Zion Canyon would not provide the desired visitor experience at the already crowded shuttle stops and along frontcountry trails and was therefore considered but dismissed.

Closing Zion Canyon to Vehicles and Eliminating the Shuttle

Closing Zion Canyon to vehicles, including park shuttles, would not meet the established GMP desired conditions for the park visitor experience in this area. If the canyon were closed to all vehicles, far fewer visitors would be able to enjoy this destination. In both the frontcountry “low” and “high” development zones, the desired conditions specify that visitors will experience the park in the relative comfort of motor vehicles and developed facilities.

Provide New Visitor Center and Supporting Visitor Facilities

Providing new and expanded facilities, including a visitor center and other extensive or major visitor facilities such as expanded parking areas, is not viable for a variety of factors. A majority of park visitors enter Zion Canyon, which is a geographically constrained, narrow, six-mile long natural corridor. Within Zion Canyon, areas that are suitable for park infrastructure, including the visitor center, museum, roads, parking areas, lodging, and campgrounds, have already been carefully developed to meet concentrated visitor use, while protecting natural and cultural resources within the developed area. In addition, Zion National Park currently has a significant deferred facility maintenance backlog (maintenance and repairs that have not been performed or delayed to a future time) because of a lack of funding. Additional significant facility development would further strain park maintenance budgets and staff and likely increase the backlog of deferred maintenance.





How to Comment

The National Park Service is asking for feedback on the preliminary alternative concepts from July 17 to August 14, 2017. During this period, the public is encouraged to comment on these alternatives and identify any advantages, disadvantages, issues, or concerns. Please keep in mind when commenting that the unique content of comments received, rather than the number of times a similar comment was heard, is what will be most helpful as we refine the alternative concepts.

There are a number of ways to participate in this process and make your voice heard. We encourage you to submit your comments electronically at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/zion>). Once on the website, select “Open for Comment” to review the document and provide your thoughts on the preliminary alternative concepts.

You can also mail your comments to the planning team at park headquarters:

Attn: Visitor Use Planning Team
Zion National Park
State Route 9
Springdale, UT 84767-1099

The park will be accepting comments through August 14, 2017.

Next Steps in the Planning Process

The planning team will analyze comments on the preliminary alternative concepts to refine them, determine possible changes and to help inform the selection of the National Park Service’s preferred alternative. The preferred alternative is the alternative the agency believes would best accomplish the purpose and need of the VUM plan while fulfilling other legal, environmental, and economic factors. The preferred alternative may be a combination of management strategies from the range of preliminary alternative concepts, rather than simply identifying one of the alternative concepts as the agency’s preferred approach.

After the identification of a preferred alternative, the range of alternatives will be analyzed and presented in an environmental assessment for public review. Public comments on the environmental assessment will be considered for further refinements before the VUM plan is finalized and approved.

The table on the back page provides an updated planning schedule, including opportunities for public input.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 DENVER SERVICE CENTER – SCOTT BABCOCK DSC-P
 ZION NATIONAL PARK VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT PLAN
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Milestone	Targeted Schedule	Public Input
Public scoping	Completed	Thank you for your input! The public scoping report was released in December 2017 and is available at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/zion
Analyze public comments and develop a range of preliminary alternatives	Completed	-
Public review of the range of preliminary alternative concepts	July 17, 2017 – August 14, 2017	Review the preliminary alternatives and provide your comments at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/zion
Analyze public comments and prepare the visitor use management plan / environmental assessment	Fall 2017 – Summer 2018	-
Public review of the visitor use management plan / environmental assessment	Fall 2018	Review the plan and provide your comments at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/zion
Analyze public comments and prepare and sign decision document	Winter 2018	Stay up-to-date on the planning process by visiting the website at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/zion

Thank you for your continued interest in the Visitor Use Management Plan for Zion National Park!