Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Technical Assistance Center Outreach/Needs Assessment Major Findings

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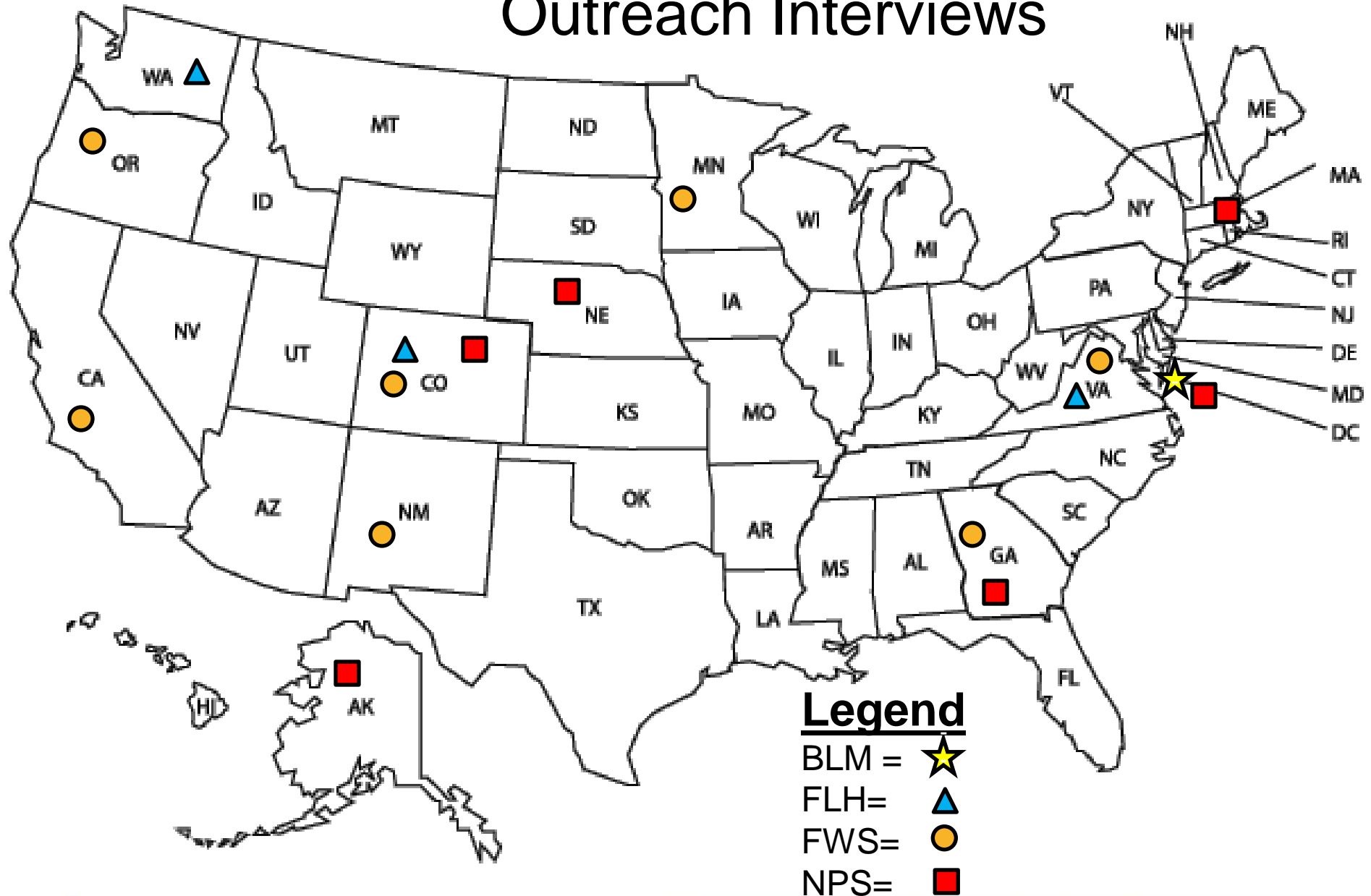Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.
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Introduction

- Background
- Questions
- Responses and Follow-up by Question
- Summary

Background

- Conducted 22 interviews over 6 weeks
  - 13 in person, 9 via telephone
- 32 interviewees throughout US
  - BLM – 4
  - FWS – 7
  - NPS – 17
  - FHWA Federal Lands – 4
- Learned a great deal to help refine Center strategic plan & work program

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Outreach Interviews

Legend
BLM = ★
FLH= ▲
FWS= ●
NPS= ■

15 Questions Asked

1. Transportation Issues
2. Which units operate ITS*
3. Traffic count stations*
4. ATS in operation*
5. Issues with existing ATS
6. TRIP grant assistance needs
7. Interested units not applying for TRIP grant
8. Suggested training
9. Guidebook/Manual Topics
10. Other documents available
11. Is peer to peer a good idea
12. Coordinate with nearby transportation providers?
13. Best approaches to assist
14. Case study suggestions
15. Additional comments or questions

* Questions asked for related Volpe and WTI projects

Question 1

What transportation issues do the units in your region experience?

Transportation Challenges

- Planning
  - Challenges identifying/defining problem, articulating needs, determining opportunities to address need, and "scoping" project with a good cost estimate.
  - Inadequate visioning/planning resources for transportation and mobility
  - Lack of coordination and cooperation of transportation activities within same unit and among nearby units – affects the ability to leverage funds with partners
  - Units do not get a lot of attention from State agencies, because their problems are small compared to urban areas
  - Limited resources including scarce funding and staff burdens hinder project development
  - Lack of a agency structure that supports one division taking responsibility for transportation
  - Lack of good traffic data
  - Need to coordinate with state transportation plans
  - Effective visitor distribution – all modes, wayfinding, visitor information, trails, etc.
- Funding
  - Lack of capital, operations, and maintenance funds is a major issue
  - Region is more likely to emphasize spending and maintaining what they have such as an existing ATS (e.g., Bryce Canyon, Grand Canyon, and Zion) than funding a new system
  - Sometimes the funding is driving the projects (e.g., propose project because there is funding instead of what is needed). The LRTP should help with this, identifying the critical needs and benefits.
  - Challenges with costing ATS projects and knowing what assumptions to use
  - Some solutions not cost-effective from a cost/visitor basis for rural units

Transportation Challenges (cont.)

- Highway
  - Signage for autos and bicycles
  - Lack of good traveler information on websites
  - Parking management issues (i.e., not enough parking and parking in undesignated area) and the resulting impacts on resources
  - Managing congestion (for some but not all units/FLMAs)
  - Limits for updating capacity of roads due to historic designation (i.e., expansion is not a feasible alternative in some areas)
  - Potential visitation/demand
  - Pure asset management
  - Extreme weather is another challenge
  - Ingress and egress safety
  - Traffic control management
  - Safety issues with wildlife crossings
  - Special events
  - Security issues

Transportation Challenges (cont.)

- Resource related
  - Focus on preservation of natural resources, visitors are secondary to preservation
  - Sometimes by "improving" transportation issues, adversely affect the very natural resources we are tasked with protecting
  - Sensitive to environmental impacts and climate change
  - Difficulties with road work due to sensitivity of biological resources and the need to schedule around them (e.g., bird nesting times, etc).
- ATS
  - Lack of understanding from the federal agencies that transit systems do not pay for themselves
  - Lack of knowledge on superintendent and staff as to how much time it takes to run system effectively
  - Staff want to jump to shuttle as a solution, but it is not always the correct solution
  - Providing connected visitor transportation with multiple modes and still providing a high quality visitor experience

Questions 2, 3, and 4

Do any units in your region currently operate intelligent transportation systems, have traffic count stations, or currently operate alternative transportation systems?

General Findings*

- Three questions asked in coordination with Volpe and WTI projects

- Locations identified for each FLMA

- Supplement locations with documents and contacts provided in interviews

- TAC recommends creating GIS database to document ITS/ATS/grant application locations

*More detailed information can be provided upon request

Question 5

Are there any issues with existing alternative transportation systems that need to be addressed?

General Issues with ATS

- Previous awareness of life cycle costs (e.g., capital, operating, maintenance)
- Financial stability
  - Operations
  - Maintenance
  - Infrastructure and bus replacement
- Operations capability
- Understanding delivery options
  - Self operated
  - Concession
  - Contract
  - Partnership
- Lack of bike and pedestrian info and support
- Lack of critical mass to support (gateway & unit)
- Providing ADA accessibility

Unit Needs Identified

- Virgin Island NP – transportation mgmt.
- Cumberland Island NS – Congressional mandate
- Savannah coastal refuge –bike/ped trails
- Gulf Island National Sanctuary – New ATS
- Cape Lookout ferry system – upgrade/mod
- Wichita Mountains NWR – upgrade/expansion
- Kennesaw Mtn. NB – system update/improv
- Bosque del Apache – bus upgrade

Follow-up

- Contact units to offer assistance
  - Identified units
  - Past grant recipients
  - Past applicants not awarded grants
- Annual query of regions to identify additional locations to contact

Question 6

What kind of assistance do you believe would help future applicants for Paul S. Sarbanes TRIP grants?

Assistance for Future Applicants

- Technical contact person to help with process
- Help preparing grants
  - What each question is seeking
  - Data necessary for each question
  - Examples of good applications
  - Outside QA of proposals
- Grant preparation training
- Transportation needs assessment assistance and training
- Quick reference guide on TRIPS process
- Identification of all available funding sources
- Obtaining data needed for application
- Identifying potential partners
- Help identifying future tipping point for when transit is warranted
- Options available that are not transit
- Feedback to unsuccessful applicants
  - Why not selected
  - What could be improved

Opportunities for Improvements to TRIP Process

- Build awareness of TRIP program – advertise beyond federal register
- Need a consistent timetable for process
  - Knowledge of when to apply every year so prepared
  - Knowledge of notification of award so easier to partner
- Coordinate process timing with category III funds
  - Leverage funds together
  - Minimize overlap and need to remove applications
- Need notification of regional managers – automate in new system
  - When call for proposals released
  - When application started
  - When grant awardees chosen
- Minimize redundancy in grant application questions
- Document elements of good grant application
- Need help with grant applications

Opportunities for Improvements to TRIP Process (cont.)

- Quick reference guide on TRIPS process
- Need documented evaluation process
  - Unsure how FLMA and FTA evaluations combine
- Clarification on criteria for evaluation
  - Belief that grants are mainly for park units with high visitation
  - How deal with choosing from different FLMAs, different regions, different size/cost projects
  - Moving people vs. visitor experience/resource protection
- Need feedback on rejected applications
  - Deficiencies
  - Specifics to improve re-submission or future applications
- Need contact at FTA for application and awardees questions

Question 7

Are you aware of any units in your region that were interested in submitting a Paul S. Sarbanes TRIP grant application, but have not done so? If so, is there a reason or obstacle that prevented this?

Obstacles for Not Applying

- Resources and/or capability to prepare application
- Discretionary funding is easier
- Value of grants
- No operating or maintenance funding
- Perception that priority given to units with high visitation
- Timing – prefer coinciding with FLMA call for projects
- Emphasis on moving people and not visitor experience
- Not aware of call for applications until late in process
- Delay in receipt of awards

TAC Grant Application Assistance (Follow-up to 6 & 7)

- Center will support three stage application process
  1. Intent to submit application
  2. Application webinar for those expressing intent
  3. Follow-up one-on-one assistance
- On-line application system
  - Clarify questions
  - Provide good examples
- Provide technical contact person to help
- Prepare quick reference guide on TRIP process
- Suggest possible avenues for assistance preparing application (e.g., FLMA service center, regions)
- Provide feedback on rejected applications - starting in FY 2011

Question 8

What transportation-related training do you think may benefit unit staff in your region?

Training Needs

- Webinars
  - Better as self-paced courses
  - More suited for younger staff
  - Do not overuse
- Training courses & workshops
  - Hard to make time and find budget for travel
  - Use case studies
  - Need to focus on specific topic
  - Regional staff should participate

Identified Training Topics of Benefit – in Rank Order

- Assistance preparing TRIP grant applications
- Alternative Transportation Systems – general
- ATS Planning
- ATS Effects on FLMA's Mission
- ATS Evaluations
- ATS Marketing
- ATS Operations
- ATS Design and Procurement

Specific Sub-Topic Training Requests

- TRIP Grant Applications
  - What projects qualify
  - Process for grant preparation, submittal, award, and management ("Recipe for applying for a grant")
  - What makes a "good" application
  - What specific data/support information is needed to support grant application and justify award

Specific Sub-Topic Training Requests (cont.)

- Alternative Transportation Systems
  - Alternative transportation systems that have been developed and implemented in national parks and public lands
  - Templates for the development of alternative systems
  - Defining intermodal connectivity
  - Determining capital and operating costs
  - What kind of transportation systems are available
  - Is an alternative transportation system needed
  - How do alternative transportation systems fit into the overall goals of visitor experience, resource protection, air quality

Specific Sub-Topic Training Requests (cont.)

- ATS Planning
  - Data collection
  - Financial analysis/planning and project cost estimating
  - Transit and transportation planning
  - "Developing more 'comprehensive' Comprehensive Conservation Plans
  - Identifying how transportation/transit improvements fit into long range planning activities
  - Congestion management/travel demand management
  - Project management
  - Disaster preparedness/response
  - Carrying capacity

Specific Sub-Topic
Training Requests (cont.)

- ATS Effects on FLMAs Mission
  - How ATS benefit units (resource impacts are not understood)
  - How to balance the negative/positive impacts of ATS deployment(s)
  - What options are there other than bus
  - How do you get buy-in for the project(s) from unit managers (identify successful models)
  - How does the implementation of ATS fit into the overall mission of the FLMAs

- ATS Evaluation
  - Data collection and monitoring
  - Data collection related to needs assessments and overall planning activities
  - Establishing common performance metrics – what determines the success of an ATS deployment
  - Case studies

Specific Sub-Topic Training Requests (cont.)

- ATS Marketing
  - How to include marketing in project proposals and overall project budgets
  - Marketing ATS services within parks while not competing with local private providers
  - Disseminating marketing materials electronically, rather than using printed brochures

- ATS Operations
  - Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) – the basics
  - ITS solutions – how can ITS applications provide benefits to units (511 systems, variable message systems, cell phone guided tours)
  - What does "operations" mean and what in included in operations and maintenance
  - Identifying operation and maintenance costs

Specific Sub-Topic Training Requests (cont.)

- ATS Design and Procurement
  - Vehicle procurement and specifications
  - Identification of contracts that may be used as examples – e.g., concessions contracts, purchase of service agreements, partnering agreements, pooled procurement contracts
  - Estimating procurement costs
  - Procurement from planning to delivery
  - Lessons learned
  - Vehicle designs that are consistent with parks and visitor experience themes

- Other Topics
  - How to identify/form holistic partnership opportunities (i.e., gateway communities, regional systems, state transit partners, public/private operators, etc.) – know who the partners should be and what they can do for you

Specific Training Requests*

- Executive level 101 transportation course for park superintendents
- Partnerships and engaging community stakeholders
- ITS – architecture compliance, strategic planning, and regulations
- Long-term financial commitment, sustainability, life cycle commitment
- Case studies as a training tool
- Performance measures
- Transportation funding sources and resources available
- Energy and the environment

*Identified at the peer group workshop

Proposed Training Delivery Methods/Tools (Follow-up)

- Distance Learning Events
  - Webinars
  - Netcasts
  - Internet Based Training (IBT)
- Self-Paced, Interactive CBTs (course based training)

Recommended Initial Training Course Selections (Follow-up)

- TRIP Grant Application and Award – A through Z
- What are Alternative Transportation Systems and How Have they Been Implemented in Parks and Public Lands
- How to Effectively Plan for and deploy Alternative Transportation Systems
- Data Collection and Project Monitoring/Evaluation
- How to Gain Local Support and Develop Partnerships

Question 9

Are there specific topics for which guidebooks, manuals or technical documents would be helpful to Units in your region?

Manual Needs

- May need to be specific to FLMA
- Pocket guides would be good
  - Condensed
  - User friendly
- Reference documents needed to supplement courses
- Often gather dust on shelf
- Introductory piece, easy to read bulleted brochure that identifies where to get additional information

Most Frequently Mentioned Topic Suggestions for New Manuals

- TRIP guidebook or manual
- Financial planning/analysis and life cycle costing
- Detailed description of available ITS, ATS, transportation management options
  - range of solutions
  - where it works
- How transportation options can be implemented, properly operated and maintained
- Data and data collection
- AT planning and management tool including cost information for life cycle planning

Question 10

Are there any documents that you are aware of that you believe should be in the ATS repository/clearinghouse?

Central Repository Needs Assessment Findings

- Creation of a central repository needed
  - Opportunity to share information between the FLMAs
  - Increase availability of documents
  - Personal assistance finding documents
- Will coordinate with NPS (intranet), Volpe, Technical Information Center (TIC) at DSC, etc
- Focus on ATS other than buses
- Creation of new manuals needed, but lower priority
  - Gather dust on shelf
  - Pocket Guides
  - Easy to read bulleted brochures
  - Some agency specific

Documents Identified for Inclusion

- Documents Already Collected
  - 3039 study
  - Federal Surface Transportation Programs and Transportation Planning for FLMAs – a Guidebook
  - NPS Transportation Planning Guidebook
  - Federal Lands Toolkit (WTI)
  - Guide to Promoting Bicycling on Federal Lands (WTI)
  - Glacier NP Evaluation (Volpe)
  - Vehicle Procurement Guide (Volpe)
  - Visitor Transportation System (VTS) reports showing cost of systems
  - Intermountain VTS study
  - Federal Highways Documents

Documents Identified for Inclusion (cont.)

- Documents Still To Collect
  - General Management Plans (GMP) for National Park Service
  - Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP) for FWS
  - Mount Rainier NP ITS Architecture and AT plan
  - Traffic data reports for parks. From EFL
  - Unit level transportation plans
  - Regional long-range plans once completed
  - Policies of NPS and Directors Orders to share with other FLMAs
  - Climate change documents
  - Evaluations of Lewis and Clark NHP (Volpe)
  - Denali shuttle evaluation including their maintenance plan and their wildlife crossing plan
  - The Glacier Bay and Brooks Camp environmental assessments

Question 11

Do you believe the units in your region would benefit from a process that connects them with alternative transportation providers?

Peer to Peer

- Peer to peer mentorship system was almost unanimously thought to be useful
- Regional mentorship most useful
- Applicable comparable units, not just large units
- Difference in opinion
  - Within agency
  - Across agencies
- Include tribes
- Include industry

Question 12

How do units in your region coordinate with nearby alternative transportation providers (e.g., transit, bicycles, ITS, etc)?

Current Projects with Coordination

- **Brainard Lake**, Colorado has stop on local transit route.
- Ski resorts (e.g., **Breckenridge, Copper Mountain**) work with USFS on shuttle stops, bike lanes, or parking.
- **White River National Forest** with Roaring Fork Transit Authority
- **Glacier National Park** with Eagle Transit
- **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park** with the local transit agency
- **Muir Woods National Monument** with Golden Gate Transit
- **Yosemite National Park** with YARTS
- **Cape Cod National Seashore**
- **Gettysburg** uses community bus
- **NY harbor** coordination

Current Projects with Coordination (cont.)

- **Minnesota Valley NWR** is working with the Metro Council and Dept. of Natural Resources on trails
- **National Elk Refuge**, Wyoming partnering with local park on trails and a sleigh for visitor transportation
- **San Juan Island National Park** partnering with San Juan's local transit system for tram operation
- **Great Smoky Mountains** and **Creek NP** partnering with local community on transit system
- **Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor, ME** has a shuttle provided as a partnership with LL Bean and other sources
- **Zion National Park** coordinates with the city of Springdale
- **Grand Canyon, Tucson, AZ**

Current Projects with Coordination (cont.)

- **<u>Pictured Rocks NL</u>** coordinates with the county transit system who provides transit to hikers
- **<u>Hawaii Volcano Islands</u>** coordinates with nearby alternative transportation providers
- **<u>Mississippi National River and Recreation Area</u>** coordinates with Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area
- Several other units in the **<u>Southeast region (NPS)</u>** which are located in metro areas go in the park or around the Parks, but it is certainly not a large coordinated effort- just a bus stop here or there
- **<u>Alaska</u>** coordinated with the State (Marine Highway, Rail system) and cruise ship concessionaires
- **<u>Units in Boston</u>** are good examples of units working with other nearby transportation providers

Potential Projects with Coordination

- **Kyle Canyon,** Nevada – RTC (Regional Transportation Commission) (Las Vegas) thinking about doing transit so talking with them
- **Lake Tahoe** – Potential future projects
- **Mount Evans** in Colorado is a potential idea for transit system
- **Trumpaco**, Wisconsin, hope to coordinate road maintenance and special events with the County
- **Gettysburg** and community were investigating transit
- **Rocky Mountain National Park** is working on an agreement with the town of Estes Park to potentially provide transit service or connections to the park

Potential Projects with Coordination (cont.)

- **<u>Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Park</u>** coordinating with the Yellowstone Area Business Merchants and Chamber of Commerce on shuttle service

- **<u>Hot Springs NP</u>** is working with local transit system on possibilities for local transit system

Question 13

Rank as high, medium, and low the best approaches to assistance.

Assistance Technique Preference

High = 3
Medium = 2
Low = 1

Bar chart of Assistance Technique preferences:
- TAGs: 2.7
- One-on-one assistance: 2.65
- Webinars: 2.1
- Training courses: 2.1
- Workshops: 1.95
- Manuals: 1.9

Assistance Technique

Assistance Approach Comments

- Strong preference for personal assistance
- Cradle to grave assistance
- TAGs
  - Units may not be aware of availability & capability
  - Should have follow-up to help institute recommendations
  - Region or National FLMA rep should be part of TAG team
- One-on-one assistance can be tailored to specific needs of unit
- Other types of assistance mentioned
  - Website
  - Blogs and list-serves
  - Ask an expert

Cradle to Grave Assistance*

- Defining need for ATS
- Collecting data to define and support ATS needs
- Identifying and creating partnerships
- Understanding effort and costs of ATS
  - Starting a transit system,
  - Benefits of partnering with existing services,
  - Other ATS solutions than transit
- Selection of Equipment
- Operations options
- Continuing evaluation
- Understanding and reaching financial sustainability
  - Booz Allen doing some work in this area with Volpe's proformas

* Cradle to Grave assistance needs to be further refined based on peer group workshop

Question 14

a. Are there units that you would recommend as candidates for successful AT partnerships? If so, which one(s)?
b. Are there units that you would recommend for AT best practices?

Criteria for Selecting Partnering Case Studies

- Relevant to Public lands initiating an ATPPL service – small and medium units
- Different Types of partnerships
- Sustainability
- Affect on visitor experience, resource protection, & transportation challenges
- Multimodal - bike access, pedestrian, ferry transportation
- Complexity of system – integration of ITS,
- Regional diversity
- Rural & urban

Partnering Case Studies

- Lots of case studies needed
  - Rarely are two systems set up similarly
- ATS should be getting visitors from local hotels
- Need to market better
- More coordinated efforts among different units

Recommended 2010 Partnership Case Studies

Unit Name	FLMA	State	Partner(s)	Unit Size	Modes	Complexity	Region	Rural or Urban
Moab	BLM	UT		S	Bike, ped, bus	S	W	Rural
White River National Forest (Aspen CO)**	FS	CO	* Roaring Fork Transit Authority * Ski areas	M	Bus		W	Rural
J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR - Sanibel Island**	FWS	FL	* City of Sanibel * LeeTran	M	Bus	M	SE	Rural
Santa Ana NWR	FWS	TX	* Texas Parks & Wildlife * World Birding Center	S	Tram	S	SW	Rural
Acadia National Park	NPS	ME	* Gateway Comm. * Private sponsor	L	Bus	L	NE	Rural
Cape Cod National Seashore	NPS	MA	Local Community	L	Bus, bike	L	NE	Urban
Gateway NRA - Sandy Hook unit	NPS	NY	NYC Transit Authority	M	Ferry	L	NE	Urban
Glacier NP	NPS		* Flathead County * Eagle Transit	L	Ferry	M	W	Rural
Lewis and Clark NHP	NPS	OR	Sunset Empire Transit District	M	Bus	S	W	Urban
Rocky Mountain National Park	NPS	CO	Estes Park	L	Bus	M	W	Rural
San Juan Island National Park	NPS	WA	State	M	Ferry, trails, possible TRAM	S	W	Rural

Proposed 2010 Case Studies

- Moab – BLM
- Grand Island – FS*
- Santa Anna NWR – FWS
- Lewis and Clark NHP- NPS

*At the workshop FS representatives expressed they wanted to change the FS case study to Grand Island

Question 15

Do you have any additional questions, comments, or concerns to discuss about AT or the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Technical Assistance Center?

Coordination

- Many activities underway by different groups that support FLMAs

- Coordination with other assistance groups necessary
  - Volpe,
  - FLH,
  - DSC,
  - San Dimas Technology and Development Center

- All of the FLMAs want coordination between region & unit

- Many opportunities exist for improvements to TRIP program/process

Assistance Needs of FLMAs

- Satisfy common as well as agency unique needs
- Target assistance to regions and units
- Cradle to grave assistance needed*
- TAC provide assistance in national ATS challenges/solutions, not just unit level
- FLMAs need help with costs for TAG travel
- Believe TAGs should be wrapped in with CCP and GMP processes
- Combined LRP for all FLMAs by region
- Integrate FLMA transportation planning with MPOs
- Personalized assistance was preferred approach
- FLMAs should partner more often with local & private entities

* Cradle to Grave assistance needs to be further refined based on peer group workshop

Conclusion/Summary

- Emphasize personal assistance over other approaches
- Assist with grant applications
- Peer to peer mentoring was viewed favorably
- Coordination critical
  - Vertically and horizontally within FLMAs
  - Other support groups
- Cradle to grave assistance is needed*

* Cradle to Grave assistance needs to be further refined based on peer group workshop

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