

Paul S. Sarbanes

Transit In Parks

Technical Assistance Center

Interim Report On Progress

Spring 2012



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What is the Transit in Parks (TRIP) Program?

The Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks (TRIP) program is a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant program that provides funding for alternative transportation systems in and around our country's national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and scenic recreation areas. The program was established to address the challenges caused by increasing vehicle congestion at these treasured natural landscapes and cultural landmarks. Projects funded by the program conserve natural, historical and cultural resources; reduce congestion and pollution; improve visitor mobility and accessibility; enhance the visitor experience; and ensure access to all, including people with disabilities. The types of projects range from visitor access studies to capital investments in shuttle buses, ferry docks, rail connections, and biking and walking trails. Projects are selected through a competitive application and award process, which is open to units of Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMAs) and to state, local and tribal governments with jurisdiction in the vicinity of an eligible area. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration in cooperation with the U. S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service.

What is the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Technical Assistance Center (TRIPTAC)?

TRIPTAC offers targeted, personalized technical assistance free of charge to federal land managers who are planning, implementing, or enhancing alternative transportation projects in their units. TRIPTAC helps connect managers and their partners with the information resources, training, or expert advice they need to plan successful projects, and address specific challenges such as vehicle specifications and purchasing, operations planning, partnership strategies, or others. The TRIPTAC team serves as an extension of staff for Federal Land Management Agencies (FLMAs), providing key transportation knowledge they may need to plan and sustain effective alternative transportation options in their units.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) sponsors TRIPTAC, in partnership with other federal agencies. TRIPTAC funding comes from the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks program. TRIPTAC assistance is available to all FLMAs, as well as state, local or tribal governments who are working in collaboration with an FLMA.

TRIPTAC Vision

Serve as the nationally-recognized center for transportation-related technical decision support and the coordination hub for FLMAs.

TRIPTAC Mission

Provide transportation-related technical assistance and enhanced coordination among FLMAs to continually improve visitor access, quality experiences, economic development and resource stewardship.

TRIPTAC services are provided by a team of public and private transportation professionals, led by the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University. Members of the team are nationally recognized research and consulting firms, including the following:



This team has extensive expertise on transportation and public lands issues, with “on-the-ground” knowledge and experience.



Overall Accomplishments

The TRIPTAC provides assistance with planning and implementation of transportation solutions that conserve resources, protect the environment and enhance the visitor experience.

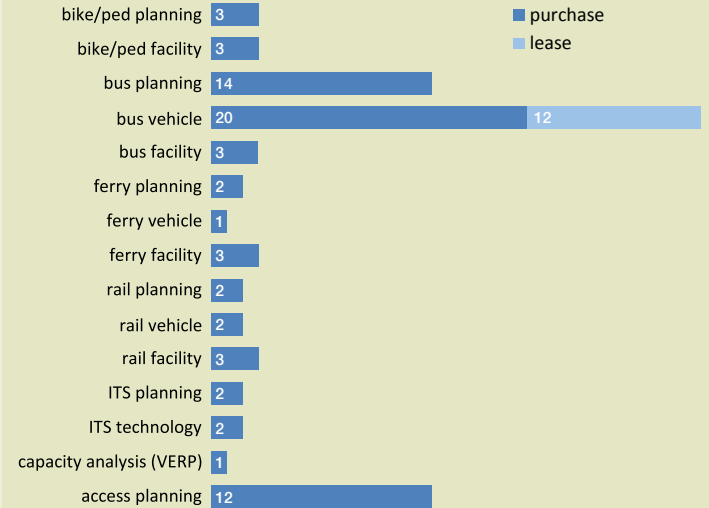
After two years, we're off to a great start in meeting today's demand and training future alternative transportation professionals (through the Public Lands Transportation Scholars initiative). TRIPTAC's efforts bolster national priorities, such as a recent Presidential Executive Order to increase travel and tourism in the U.S., which specifically cites the revenues and jobs generated by tourism to iconic national parks and other public lands. We are proud to play an important, ongoing role in developing the economic opportunities associated with federal lands, and preserving the natural beauties and historic treasures of our nation.

A primary focus is helping FLMAs maximize the use of grant funding received from TRIP grants. Since 2006, the TRIP program has distributed more than \$150 million dollars to FLMAs and their partner organizations. In fact, states, cities, tribal agencies and other collaborators have received more than half of this funding. TRIP grants are enabling the implementation of more than 290 alternative transportation projects across the country.

The FLMAs served by TRIP grants and TRIPTAC, as well as the surrounding regions, have experienced benefits such as:

- Increased visitation, which can result in increased tourism spending
- Direct job creation, through new positions such as shuttle drivers
- Indirect business opportunities, such as the establishment of bike rental services near expanded trails

Completed FY 2006-2008 TRIP Projects by Category



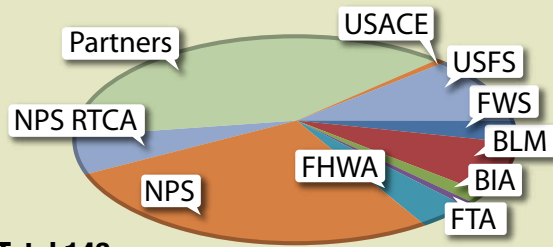
Accomplishments

- Assembling 40 technical experts, creating a one-stop shop on-call panel
- Responding to over 140 Help Desk requests from all Federal Land Management Agencies and 48 partner organizations in 36 states and one territory (Puerto Rico) to provide personalized technical assistance
- Creating an online repository of over 230 trainings that has experienced over 3,300 webpage hits
- Developing innovative training events
- Conducting more than 950 contact training hours
- Developing and improving electronic project evaluation/selection (94% users stated "saved time")
- Creating guidance documents based specifically on needs identified by clients
- Launching an extensive (130+ documents) searchable Resource Library accessible through website (3,500+ hits)



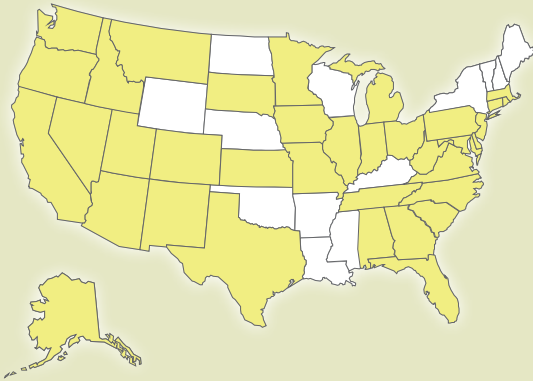
Technical Assistance

Who has requested assistance?

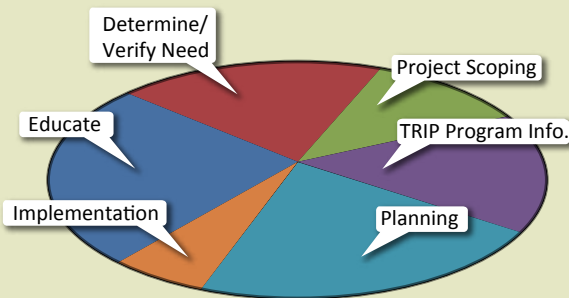


Total 143

Assistance provided in 36 states



Categories of Assistance



TRIPTAC is filling a valuable transportation technical assistance niche, matching Federal land managers to resources and expertise that fill gaps or overcome hurdles, helping them move forward toward Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) implementation and success. To date, we have:

- Assembled a network of more than 40+ technical liaisons, who have expertise in a wide variety of transportation and resource management issues, including carrying capacity, vehicle procurement, transit operations, planning, marketing, visitor experience, and financial sustainability.
- Launched user-friendly access to technical assistance, such as our help desk, available by phone or email, and a website which is full of helpful resources and useful information.
- Provided technical assistance in response to over 140 requests from 36 states.
- Facilitated “lifecycle” services, with assistance throughout all stages of a project, from pre-planning through monitoring and evaluation.

Success Stories

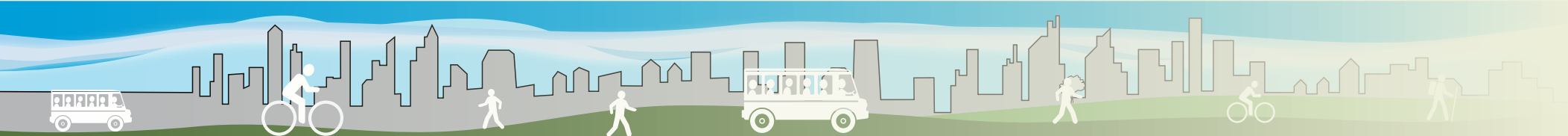
Sleeping Bear Dunes

At Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, a broad partnership of more than 15 public and private agencies is developing the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail – 27 miles of multi-use trail along the shores of Lake Michigan. The trails will create connections to the Lakeshore’s main visitor destinations, as well as provide walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users, and others with a safe and scenic way to explore the region. A positive indicator of the trail’s economic impact is the construction of a bike shop near one of the trail heads—creating jobs and promoting access. TRIPTAC team members worked with the Lakeshore management and NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) to provide technical and planning guidance, including information on trail construction materials and landscape design assistance.

Harper’s Ferry

Harper’s Ferry National Historical Park in West Virginia offers living history sites and activities, including demonstrations and reenactments, walking tours of the town, and hiking trails through battlegrounds and surrounding countryside. The current shuttle system in the Park connects the Visitor Center with the lower town district.

The Park is currently exploring expansion of the shuttle system and upgrades to the bus garage. TRIPTAC staff members played an important role in route planning and development, as well as helping the Park generate, map out, and test six alternative bus routes. Bike and pedestrian options were also discussed.



CAR-LESS California

The USDA Forest Service in partnership with the California University System, and other FLMAs, are leading an effort called “California Alternative transportation for Recreation – Leisure for Everyone that is Seamless and Sustainable,” or CAR-LESS. The vision is to create seamless transit services that connect visitors to outdoor recreational opportunities on public lands, with a focus on improving access to under-represented visitor populations.

TRIPTAC has provided guidance since the inception of the project. Staff members serve on the project technical assistance team, and have helped develop the vision and the regional planning approach, which entails identifying and linking key corridors within one region of the state.

In the first phase of this pilot project, planning will start in central California. In subsequent phases, the approach will be replicated in northern and southern California. It is also expected to serve as a model for other regions of the U.S.

CAR-LESS California scales and timeline of project planning

Tier 1: Regional Transit Networks



Tier 2: Transit Corridor Planning



Tier 3: Station Area Site Design and implementation



“ Our team has greatly benefited from having TRIPTAC attend every planning meeting and a very successful public workshop....TRIPTAC helped us focus on the important details, thus keeping our study on time and on track.”

Rebecca Harriett, Superintendent, Harper’s Ferry National Historical Park

“ TRIPTAC has offered assistance throughout the project, from the development of detailed objectives, to performing critical mapping tasks, to managing meeting details. They are knowledgeable, professional and a real pleasure to work with.”

Anita Bueno, USDA Forest Service

“ [TRIPTAC] did a great job [on the donor recognition plaza]. You guys are so detailed.”

Barbara Nelson Jameson, NPS River, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

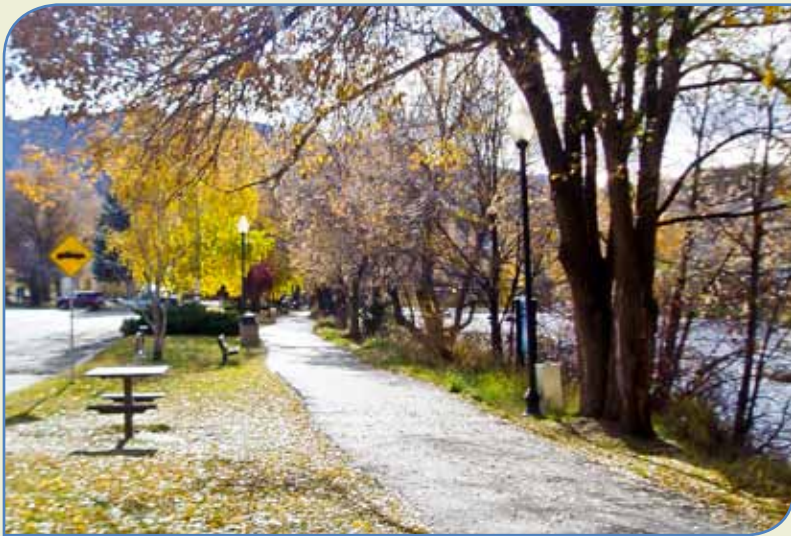


Training and Workshops



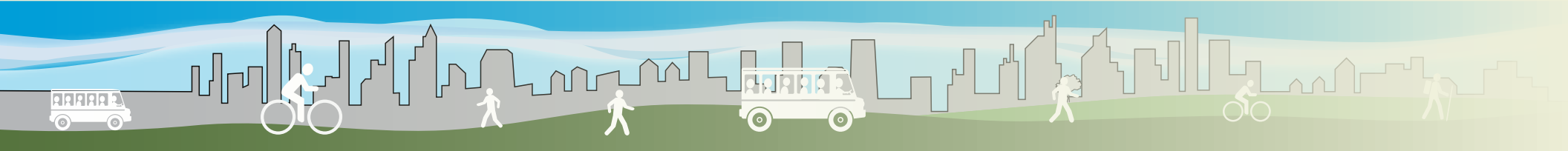
Many Federal land managers tell us that they have a great demand for training, but are subject to travel restrictions and travel funding limitations. TRIPTAC has developed and launched a range of cost-effective training alternatives to address FLMA training demand and travel restrictions, many of which can be accessed from an office computer. The webinars enable managers to watch from their offices with no travel required. Streaming versions are also offered so managers can watch when it is convenient for them. The training options include:

- A series of webinars on high-interest topics suggested by clients.
- Streaming video versions of training events, available on the TRIPTAC website.
- The TRIPTAC Training Catalog, an online, searchable inventory of trainings that are available from TRIPTAC, as well as from other agencies.
- Regional workshops and trainings that “bring TRIPTAC to you.”



Training Success

- TRIPTAC Training Catalog currently contains more than 230 trainings
- 3,300 hits on training webpage
- Federal land managers and personnel have downloaded past trainings more than 160 times, handouts from past trainings more than 350 times, and streamed trainings 130 times
- Monthly “e-blast” goes out to more than 900 clients
- TRIPTAC has conducted more than 950 contact hours of training



Success Stories

TRIP and ATS Training Webinars

The TRIPTAC team has developed a series of training webinars that directly address many of the common TRIP grant issues and ATS training needs faced by Federal land managers. A few of the most popular webinars include:

- Grant Writing
- Cost Estimating and Financial Sustainability
- ATS and the Role of Partnerships and Stakeholder Involvement

These webinars have been successful because they are easy to access, cost-effective, and address issues that are timely and directly relevant to the training needs of Federal land managers.

Regional Workshops

Over the last two years, TRIPTAC has hosted regional workshops in Denver, Portland, and Boston to introduce the Center to Federal land managers who have transportation responsibilities and provide opportunities for communication and collaboration.



“*The best thing about the regional event was the face to face with the [TRIP]TAC folks, and understanding what their role is relative to the Sarbanes [TRIP] program.*”
Webinar participant

“*[The Grant Writing Webinar] was easy to do, convenient, relevant. Nice to hear from the people who are involved in the day to day aspects of the program. Presenters were knowledgeable. It was free!*”
Webinar participant

TRIPTAC is pleased to promote increased interest and expanded participation in the Transit in Parks (TRIP) grant program. Our TRIP webpage has had more than 1,700 hits, and is a popular source of information on the program and how to apply. Our TRIP grant writing training session has the highest attendance of all our training programs.



Outreach, Communication, Coordination

To further the work of both the TRIP program and the TRIPTAC, team members:

- Work in close collaboration with TRIP program partners, as well as many other public and private entities with common interests and goals.
- Sponsor and lead a peer group of nationally recognized transportation and resource protection leaders.
- Promote TRIPTAC activities and reach out proactively to current and prospective Center clients.

Progress and Accomplishments

TRIPTAC has achieved a national presence on ATS issues, and has taken a proactive, leadership role in policy development and strategic planning. Key activities include:

- Presentations and participation at conferences and workshops across the country, including those sponsored by the Transportation Research Board, Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, United States Forest Service, Federal Transit Administration, National Association and Recreation Resource Planners, Association of Conservation Engineers, Association of Partners for Public Lands, Federal Planning Division, and other partner organizations.
- Coordination of an initiative to enhance professional development in public lands transportation through a new Scholars Program.
- Publication of a quarterly electronic newsletter that reaches over 900 subscribers.

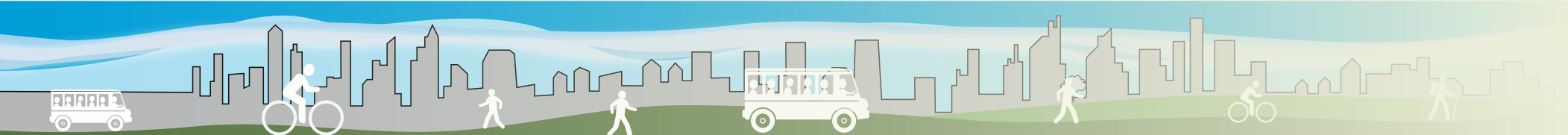
“

I had seen one of the other participants at the water cooler in our building many times in the past, but never knew who they were until today. Thank you for the opportunity to meet others”
NPS Denver Service Center employee

“

It's a powerful thing to teach people in a rural community how to accomplish a dream. That's what you do and I feel very lucky that all of us working on the Wayne County Bike Ped Pathway project have the opportunity to work with you and learn from you... Thank you again for getting us started in the right direction.”

Janet Borg, Wayne County (Utah) Business Association.



Success Story:

TRIP Project Selection Process Improvement

TRIPTAC team members have played an integral role in enhancing the Transit in Parks (TRIP) grant application process. As laid out in the cooperative agreement with FTA, TRIPTAC has developed software that facilitates the grant application review process. During the evaluation process, 88% of the users felt the system standardized, streamlined, and simplified the TRIP evaluation.

TRIPTAC's assistance in this process supports the long-term viability of the TRIP program through enhanced operational efficiencies, and improves the effectiveness of the grants themselves through effective project selection.



“

Kudos to TRIPTAC. This evaluation process last August with the software was fabulous. I think it really helped out the review process and it was outstanding”

Jim Evans, NPS

From the 2011 project selection evaluation survey:

- 88% felt the evaluation system standardized, streamlined and simplified the TRIP evaluation
- 83% felt the evaluation system saved their agency time (over the pre-computerized evaluation) in evaluating the grants
- 94% felt the evaluation system saved the Technical Review Committee (TRC) time (over the pre-computerized evaluation) in evaluating the grants
- *“very user friendly, outstanding system”*
- *“Instant displays on the fly provided great efficiency and time savings at [the TRC] meeting”*
- *“very rapid response time prior to and during the evaluation meeting. The evaluation system was very responsive to our needs.”*
- *“very useful for regional staff. Received several compliments on ease of use.”*



Resource Library

The Resource Library aims to compile – in one place – a solid foundation of reference and guidance materials for Federal land managers. Initial accomplishments include:

- Launch of the Resource Library Search, an online, searchable database, with an extensive collection of guidance publications, including design guidelines, sample plans, manuals, legislation, reports, and toolboxes.
- Sponsorship and creation of documents on ATS issues of special interest to TRIPTAC clients, including four case studies, a research paper, a bike/pedestrian manual, a Transportation Assistance Group report, and other reports.
- Creation of a one-stop-shop with links to key documents by other agencies, such as the Transportation Planning Process for Transit in Federal Land Management Areas Guidebook.



To date, the TRIPTAC Resource Library has more than 130 documents to choose from. It is our most visited webpage with more than 3,500 hits. TRIPTAC-authored documents alone have been downloaded more than 330 times. Visit the Resource Library at: <http://www.triptac.org/ResourceLibrary/Default.html>

Success Stories

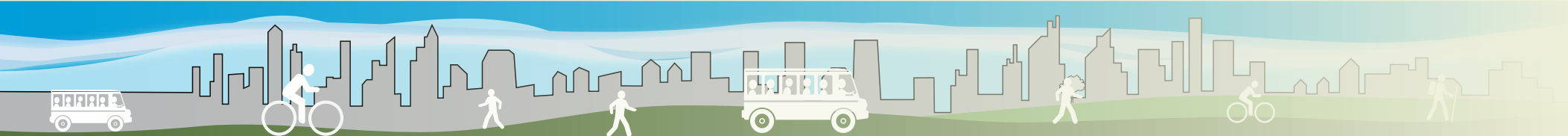
Partnership Case Studies

Based on TRIPTAC Peer Group input, site visits were conducted and reports developed that document effective strategies, partnerships and lessons learned. Case studies showcased include:

- Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge (Fish and Wildlife Service Case Study). Downloaded more than 50 times.
- North Moab Recreation Area (Bureau of Land Management Case Study). Downloaded more than 80 times!
- Cape Cod National Seashore (National Park Service Case Study). [Forthcoming]
- Grand Island National Recreation Area (U.S. Forest Service Case Study). [Recently released]

Encouraging Bicycling & Pedestrians on Federal Lands

Integrating bicycle and pedestrian systems into existing transportation networks can help Federal land managers promote resource protection, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, further ecological balance, achieve financial sustainability and improve visitor enjoyment. To this end, TRIPTAC recently released “Good Practices to Encourage Bicycling & Pedestrians on Federal Lands.” This report compiles a wealth of example programs and plans from federal lands and cities and counties across the U.S. and contains sample plans, data tables, design elements and other useful components of successful plans. It provides a valuable starting point and reference guide to what other managers have successfully implemented.



Foundation for Future Collaborations

We are proud to have been able to assist a wide variety of FLMA clients and help them achieve their ATS goals. In meeting our mission we recognized that an incremental and phased approach would be needed to strategically and tactically implement TRIPTAC as the “Center of Centers.” In addition, we are focused on establishing a strong foundation of expertise and partners, from which we can build and leverage future initiatives.

Future Initiatives

Scholars Program

TRIPTAC is excited to announce a new program called the “Public Lands Transportation Scholars Program.” The initiative will create a program (similar to the National Parks Foundation Transportation Scholars Program) that offers transportation specialists a unique career development opportunity to work with the staff at a unit or region/field office of any of the four Federal Land Management Agencies. These scholars will spend their time helping to develop transportation solutions that will preserve the valuable resources and enhance the visitor experience using alternative transportation. The project will kick off in early 2012.

This program represents a collaborative, multi-disciplinary effort with potential benefits for all concerned. Units have access to additional staff to develop special projects, and participants gain valuable, hands-on career training. The project also supports national workforce development goals to train the next generation of transportation and resource management professionals.

Transportation Access and the Local Economy

Federal land units can be powerful economic drivers. According to a recent Presidential Executive Order, visits to public lands contribute 400,000 jobs and nearly \$50 billion in activity to the U.S. economy. In the future, TRIPTAC will be assisting FLMAs to implement transportation solutions that will build stronger local, state and national economies by promoting greater access to federal lands. By enhancing and facilitating travel to recreation opportunities, these initiatives will create transportation and tourism jobs in gateway communities, and attract previously under-represented populations and youths to federal lands, encouraging the next generation of visitors.

Phased Approach to Achieving Vision

Phasing

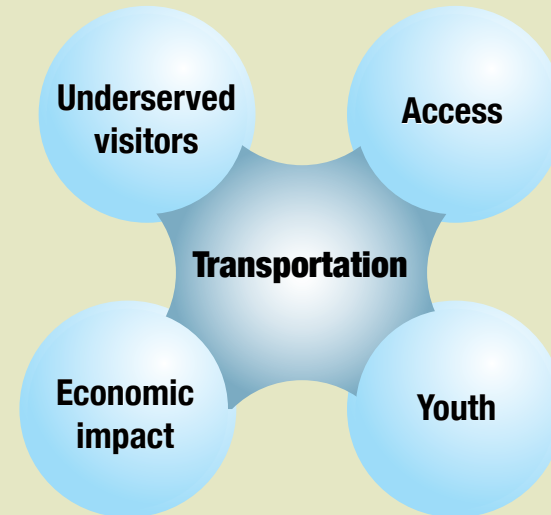
3: Implement “Center of Centers”
- as a single point of contact

2: Enhance TRIPTAC services to meet stakeholder needs

1: Lead expanded understanding of FLMA transportation needs, and existing programs

Foundation

Achieving National Goals Through Transportation



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“ *TRIPTAC made some very useful and key connections with BLM partners and potential partners*”

- David Jeppesen,
Bureau of Land Management

“ *Thanks for arranging for students to help collect data!*”

- Susan Law,
FHWA, Western Federal Lands Highway Division

“ *Because of the assistance the (TRIP) TAC provided, we were able to gather more data, and more detail in the data.*”

- Laurie Miskimins,
FHWA, Central Federal Lands Highway Division

“ *Thank you so much.....what a great service! TRIPTAC is an amazing resource.*”

- Kristen Stallman, Oregon Department of Transportation,
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Coordinator

“ *Without [TRIPTAC], finalizing our Title VI plan, procuring the electric vehicles and drafting the DBE plan would have been much more difficult.*”

- Will Norris, Administrative Intern, City of The Dalles, OR