

A Meta-Analysis of Transportation Within United States National Parks

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Abstract

Eco-tourism has been, and continues to be, a booming sector of the United States economy. At the center of this is the popularity of national parks. Part of the appeal of national parks, according to visitors, is the feeling of freedom one feels getting to travel across large pieces of land in a personal automobile. However, as national parks have become increasingly popular, so has the number of visitors. Since the use of personal automobiles to travel through parks is not reliant on a bus schedule or waiting in a line, the number of personal automobiles entering national parks has skyrocketed. Traffic congestion, wildlife accidents, crowding, overflowing parking lots, and parking off pavement present a challenge to managers attempting to protect visitors as well as the integrity of the natural environment. With this predicament, it can be difficult to understand as researchers, what aspect of transportation should be given focus at this time. Therein, we propose a meta-analysis of national park transportation literature, in which we identify research gaps by, 1) quantifying what parks and research foci are being given the most attention, and 2) put the parks and research foci in historic context, for the purposes of understanding how research has developed over time. This information could be used by researchers partnered with national parks to guide future research efforts to combat automobile overcrowding and its negative effects on the natural environment.