

**Transportation Observations,
Considerations, and Recommendations for
Sawtooth National Recreation Area**

Provided by the Interagency Transportation Assistance Group (TAG)

**Ketchum, ID
August 19-21, 2008**

A field investigation of the current transportation infrastructure and issues affecting the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (NRA) by the interagency Transportation Assistance Group (TAG) was conducted August 19-21, 2008, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS). This TAG report was prepared subsequent to the site visit and documents current conditions and transportation issues observed and describes considerations and recommendations arising from the TAG team's analysis. The site visit and preparation of this report were facilitated and funded by the USFS and the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks Program, formerly the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL) Program, administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in coordination with the Department of the Interior (DOI).

The *Federal Lands Alternative Transportation Systems Study*^{*}, a report sponsored jointly by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FTA, completed in 2003, assessed alternative transportation feasibility at the Sawtooth NRA. The study concluded that there were multiple alternative transportation strategies which showed potential and recommended a more detailed examination.

Background and Existing Conditions

Overview

The Sawtooth NRA is located in central Idaho, approximately a 160-mile drive from Boise and a 300-mile drive from Salt Lake City, Utah (see Figure 1). It covers portions of central Idaho's Boise, Custer, Elmore, and Blaine Counties. The Sawtooth NRA is part of the Sawtooth National Forest, which consists of over 2 million acres and is subdivided into three ranger districts (Ketchum, Fairfield, Minidoka) as well as the Sawtooth NRA (see Figure 2). The Sawtooth NRA consists of more than 756,000 acres of beautiful mountain scenery – including azure glacial lakes, jagged peaks, verdant conifer and aspen forests, and open rangeland. The Sawtooth NRA contains four major mountain ranges, the headwaters of five major rivers, 967 miles of streams, and more than 1,100 lakes. As will be described in depth below, it is a destination for viewing natural scenery and

^{*}*Field Report: Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area. Federal Lands Alternative Transportation Systems Study: Summary of Forest Service ATS Needs. Prepared by Cambridge Systematics, Inc. for Federal Highway Administration and United States Forest Service. January 2004.*

wildlife, camping, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, hunting, and fishing. The area is steeped in history, including extensive 19th century mining operations and Native American settlement dating back 12,000 years. More than 217,000 acres of the Sawtooth NRA comprise the federally-designated Sawtooth Wilderness Area, including 40 peaks of more than 10,000 feet, 300 lakes, and 250 miles of trails. More than 25,000 acres of private land on the Sawtooth NRA continue to be used for year-round residences, recreational homes, and cattle ranches.

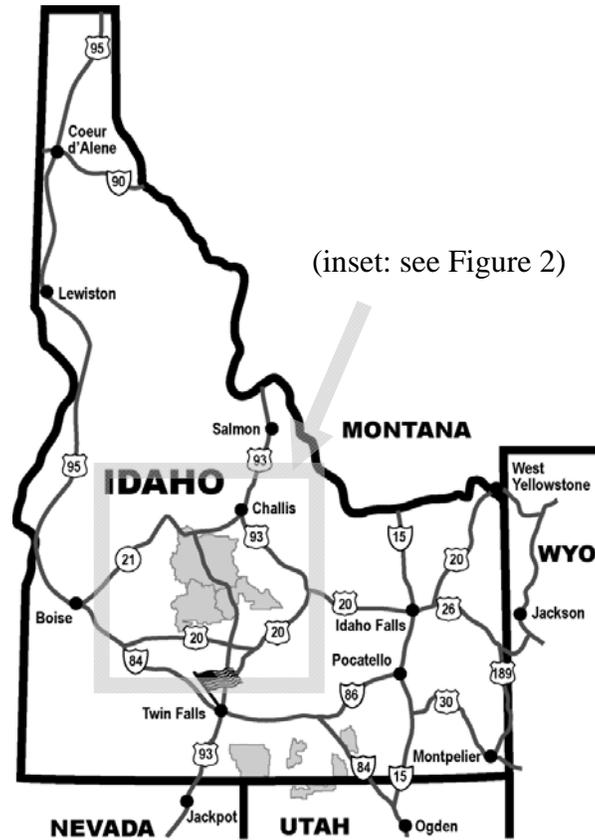


Figure 1: Location of Sawtooth National Forest
(source: Sawtooth National Forest website, Motor Vehicle Use Map).

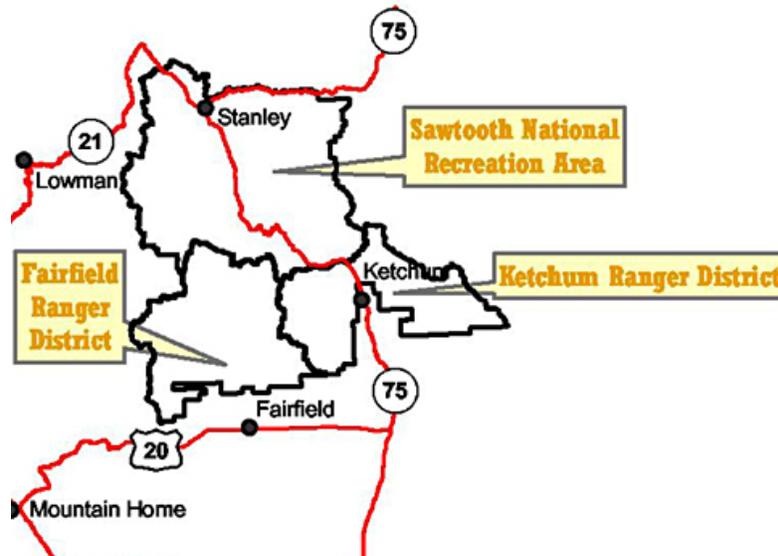


Figure 2: Map of the Sawtooth NRA & northern ranger districts
(source: Sawtooth National Forest website).

The Sawtooth NRA is only accessible by car via SH-75, which runs north-south through the Sawtooth NRA; gateway communities lie at both its north and south ends. Stanley, located at the junction of SH-75 and SH-21 within the northern end of the Sawtooth NRA, is a focal point during summers for visitors boating and camping on Redfish Lake and hiking in the Sawtooth Wilderness Area (both located on the Sawtooth NRA) and for those who come to enjoy the rafting opportunities of central Idaho. In winter, snowmobiling has the potential to attract visitors from Boise to Stanley, especially now that clear passage along SH-21 is becoming more reliable and predictable due to avalanche management, as will be discussed further below. Ketchum and Sun Valley, located sixty miles south of Stanley on SH-75 (and eight miles to the south of the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters Office), are destinations for both summer and winter recreation and are known worldwide for alpine skiing. The city of Hailey, 12 miles south of Ketchum, is the largest of the local communities and the county seat of Blaine County.

Access to the Sawtooth NRA is predominantly by automobile, though many visitors fly into Boise or Hailey and take either buses or taxis to their lodging. The Sawtooth NRA is accessible via a 3-hour drive from Boise, either along SH-21/Ponderosa Pine Scenic Byway to Stanley, in the north, or down I-84 to US-26 (or US-20) to SH-75/Sawtooth Scenic Byway to Ketchum/Sun Valley, in the south. According to the Field Report (2004), approximately 50% of visitors enter the Sawtooth NRA from the south on SH-75 and 35% enter via SH-21 from the Boise area. The remaining 15% enter using another scenic byway, the Salmon River Scenic Byway/SH-75, which accesses Stanley from Challis in the northeast.



Figure 3: Map of central Idaho (source: *Idaho Tourism* <http://www.visitidaho.org/>).

TAG Study Areas

For the purposes of alternative-transportation recommendations, this report focuses on access to the Sawtooth NRA but also considers local communities and relevant sections of the Sawtooth Forest, in particular the Ketchum Ranger District. The report will refer to two subareas—Wood River Valley (including parts of the Ketchum Ranger District) and the City of Stanley/Redfish Lake—as well as the area as a whole. The Wood River Valley extends from the Galena summit through Ketchum and Sun Valley to Hailey and Bellevue. The North Valley refers to that portion of the Wood River Valley between Galena Summit and the Galena Lodge. The City of Stanley/Redfish Lake area includes the City of Stanley, the Redfish Lake Recreation Complex, and the land between the two.

Mission & Goals

As mentioned above, the Sawtooth NRA is part of the Sawtooth National Forest, which was created in 1905 by President Theodore Roosevelt to preserve 2,100,000 acres of forests, rivers, lakes, and high mountain peaks. The Sawtooth NRA was created by Congress in 1972 “to assure the preservation and protection of the natural, scenic,

historic, pastoral, and fish and wildlife values and to provide for the enhancement of recreational values.”

In the Final Forest Plan Revision for Sawtooth National Forest (July 2003), several goals under “Facilities and Roads and Recreation Resources” demonstrate the Sawtooth NRA’s interest in providing visitors with transportation options that match the forest’s other goals. The plan commits to providing and maintaining “a safe, efficient forest transportation system that meets resource management and access needs, while mitigating degrading resource effects” and coordinating “transportation systems, management, and decommissioning with other federal, state and county agencies, tribal governments, permittees, contractors, cost-share cooperators, and the public to develop a shared transportation system serving the needs of all parties to the extent possible.” The plan also commits to managing motorized and non-motorized travel and travel-related facilities so as to:

- a) Provide for public safety,
- b) Meet resource objectives and access needs,
- c) Mitigate road and trail damage, and
- d) Minimize maintenance costs and user conflicts.

The plan also commits to collaborating with other government agencies, recreation partners, volunteer organizations, and the recreation and tourism industry in recreation planning and delivery efforts to:

- a) Provide support to local economies,
- b) Promote management efficiency, and
- c) Improve recreation opportunities and experiences available to the public.

These goals are in line with the goals of the Transit in the Parks Program, which focuses on improving visitor experience, reducing congestion and pollution, and protecting natural, cultural, and historic resources.

Visitation

A main source of data on visitation for the U.S. Forest Service is the National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey (NVUMS), which relies on a recreation sampling system and is intended to estimate total visitation for a year. It allows for standardization across forests but can be limited by sample size in its ability to accurately portray visitor patterns for units that have distinct seasonal use patterns and activities that vary greatly by season, as the Sawtooth Forest and Sawtooth NRA does. Visitation to the City of Stanley/Redfish Lake area is primarily in the summer (mid-June to Labor Day); the Wood River Valley region experiences the same summer peak but has an additional winter peak, between Christmas and March, with primary activity focused on the Wells Fargo Boulder Mountain Tour, a cross-country skiing race, in early February. Activities on the NRA and Forest vary throughout the year, as will be described below. In addition, NVUMS descriptive information about national forest visitors is based upon only those visitors that were interviewed; there were 3,000 interviewees for the Forest and 1,800 for the

NRA. However, NVUMS is still a useful and reliable source of visitor information that can and should be supplemented by other information available, such as tourism information from the Sun Valley/Ketchum Chamber and Visitors Bureau and state survey information.

From October 2004 through September 2005, NVUMS estimated that there were 1,188,600 national forest visits and 1,398,400 site visits on Sawtooth National Forest, including 343,300 forest visits (29%) and 623,800 site visits (45%) on the Sawtooth NRA and an additional 32,900 wilderness visits on the Sawtooth NRA. This is in line with the average of 1.25 million visitors that the forest has experienced in previous years; the highest recorded visitation (1.4 million) was during 1995-96. In the NVUMS sample for the Forest, the majority of visits (86%) had the forest as the final destination, as opposed to as a side trip (6%). For the Sawtooth NRA, 77% of those interviewed were visiting for recreation, 10% were passing through on the way elsewhere, and 7% were commuting for work. Almost 87% of those interviewed only went to one site (71% of the Sawtooth NRA visitors only went to one site) with an average of 1.3 site visits per national forest visit and 1.6 site visits per national recreation area visit.

In the NVUMS sample, there was an average of 2.7 people per vehicle with an average of 2.2 axles per vehicle (2.9 and 2.1 respectively for the Sawtooth NRA). The average national forest visit length of stay was 25.2 hours and the average site visit was 10.6 hours; however, the median length of stay for site visits was only 4.4 hours, indicating that time spent varied considerably by type of site (Day Use Developed site visits averaged 2.8 hours and Overnight Use Developed site visits averaged 33.9 hours). Visits to the Sawtooth NRA lasted longer, with an average of 31.8 hours for length of stay and 14.2 hours for site visits.

Nearly 50% of visitors to both the Forest and NRA indicated their trip included at least one night away from home. Of these visitors, approximately 50% stayed overnight within 50 miles of the forest. For the Forest, visitors averaged 10 nights away from home, while for the NRA, visitors averaged 5.5 days. For the Forest, over a third (36%) of national forest visits by visitors who spent the night were in rented cabins, lodges, or hotels not on national forest lands, while another third (31%) were spent camping (either in developed or undeveloped areas). For the NRA, nearly 50% camped on national forest lands, either in developed (30%) or undeveloped (14%) sites. As of 2004, the number of lodging rooms provided by local communities numbered over 1,500 (Sun Valley: 813, Ketchum: 590, Stanley: 150, Hailey: 43); Hailey has since increased its capacity to almost 200 and there are 218 hotel rooms in the pipeline for Ketchum.

A significant portion of visitors interviewed in the NVUMS were local. For the Forest, 32% lived within 25 miles of the Forest and 50% within 100 miles; 41% who listed zip codes were from Idaho (10% from Ketchum). However, nearly a third (28%) reported living over 500 miles away. An additional 33% who provided zip codes were from the intermountain region (NV, NM, AZ, UT, WY, CO) and 13% were from CA-OR-WA. The remainder was equally spread across the U.S. as well as some foreign visitors (1%).

NRA visitors showed similar trends: 16% lived within 25 miles of the Forest and nearly 40% within 100 miles; nearly 60% who listed zip codes were from Idaho (nearly 18% from Ada County, which includes Boise, and 17% from Blaine County (nearly 7% from Ketchum)). However, 25% reported living over 500 miles away and 2% came from a foreign country. 6% came from the intermountain region, and 11% from CA-OR-WA.

Most visitors are frequent visitors to the forest; 54% of respondents reported 6 or more visits to the forest, and nearly half of those (25%) reported more than 50. The NRA attracted more people from further away and thus fewer repeat visitors, with only 30% reporting 6 or more visits and only 4% reporting more than 50.

According to the Sun Valley/Ketchum Chamber and Visitors Bureau, as of 2008, the area hosts 95,000 winter guests, with an average length of stay of 4.5 nights, and 135,000 summer guests, with an average length of stay of 2.5 nights. Summer visitors are, on average, significantly less wealthy (\$88,000 household income) than winter visitors (\$152,700 household income). Based on data in the 2004 Field Report, summer visitors are also more local (50% from Idaho vs. 20% in the winter). The average skier days for 1998-2007 was 389,541 for alpine skiing and 76,511 for Nordic skiing. Year-round occupancy averages 60% for hotels, ranging from 35% to 85%, with peak occupancy in July and August and a smaller peak in January and February (see Figure 4).

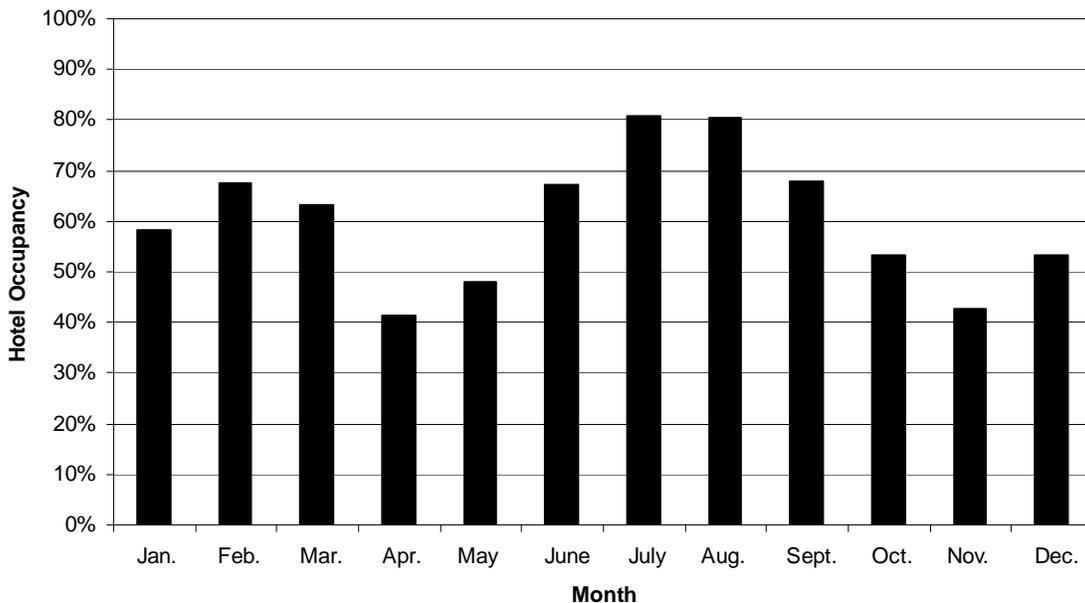


Figure 4: Average Hotel Occupancy by Month for October 2002-July 2008
(source: Sun Valley/Ketchum Chamber and Visitor's Bureau).

The University of Idaho's 1999-2000 *Idaho Resident and Nonresident Motor Vehicle Travel Survey* provided a detailed snapshot of the recreation activity characteristics, demographics, and travel patterns for the Central Idaho travel region, focused on the Sawtooth NRA and Sun Valley-Ketchum. The most relevant findings of the study to

alternative-transportation needs are covered in the 2004 Field Report, but some of the more relevant information and conclusions from the survey are: a high percentage of winter visitors arrive by air and do not drive personal vehicles during their stay; winter is the most popular time in Idaho to drive to access outdoor recreational activities; travelers to central Idaho have the highest winter recreation participation rate in Idaho (70%); Stanley does become a significant destination (15%) in central Idaho in the summer; and, annually, nearly 80 percent of non-resident visitors are repeat visitors.

The top five recreation activities of visitors to the Sawtooth National Forest according to the NVUMS were viewing natural features (49%), hiking/walking (39%), viewing wildlife (39%), downhill skiing (37%), and relaxing (33%). Driving for pleasure (22%) (40%) was the next top activity and 40% reported using the scenic byway. In contrast, the top five recreation activities of visitors to the NRA were viewing natural features (58%), hiking/walking (55%), relaxing (52%), viewing wildlife (47%), and driving for pleasure (40%). 86% reported using the scenic byway.

Each visitor was also asked to pick a main activity for their current recreation visit to the forest. The top main activities for the Forest as a whole were downhill skiing (35%), hiking/walking (16%), viewing natural features (11%), relaxing (9%) and cross-country skiing (5%). The top main activities for the NRA were hiking/walking (20%), viewing natural features (16%), relaxing (14%) and cross-country skiing (12%). Driving for pleasure was listed as a main activity by 7% of those interviewed on the NRA; biking, 1.4% (8% reported biking as an activity); and snowmobiling, 1%.

Most of the activities listed above can be found in the Wood River Valley; it is particularly popular in the summer for bicycling, hiking, and mountain biking, and in the winter for alpine skiing, Nordic skiing, snow-shoeing, and snowmobiling. There is a paved Wood River Valley trail system that is popular among pedestrians, bicyclists, skaters, and cross-country skiers for both recreation and commuting; it runs along SH-75 from Bellevue to north of Ketchum, right before the entrance to the Sawtooth NRA. Within the Sawtooth NRA, there is a set of off-road, non-motorized trails collectively known as the North Valley Trails, including the Harriman Trail, which runs from Galena Lodge to the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters, and the North Fork Loop Trail, which are adjacent to the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters (see Figure 5). According to a survey by the Blaine County Recreation District (BCRD), the most popular stretch of the Harriman Trail during the winter is between Cathedral Pines and Sawtooth NRA Headquarters. These two set of trails do not connect; there is currently an 8-mile gap between the Wood River Valley and Harriman trails.

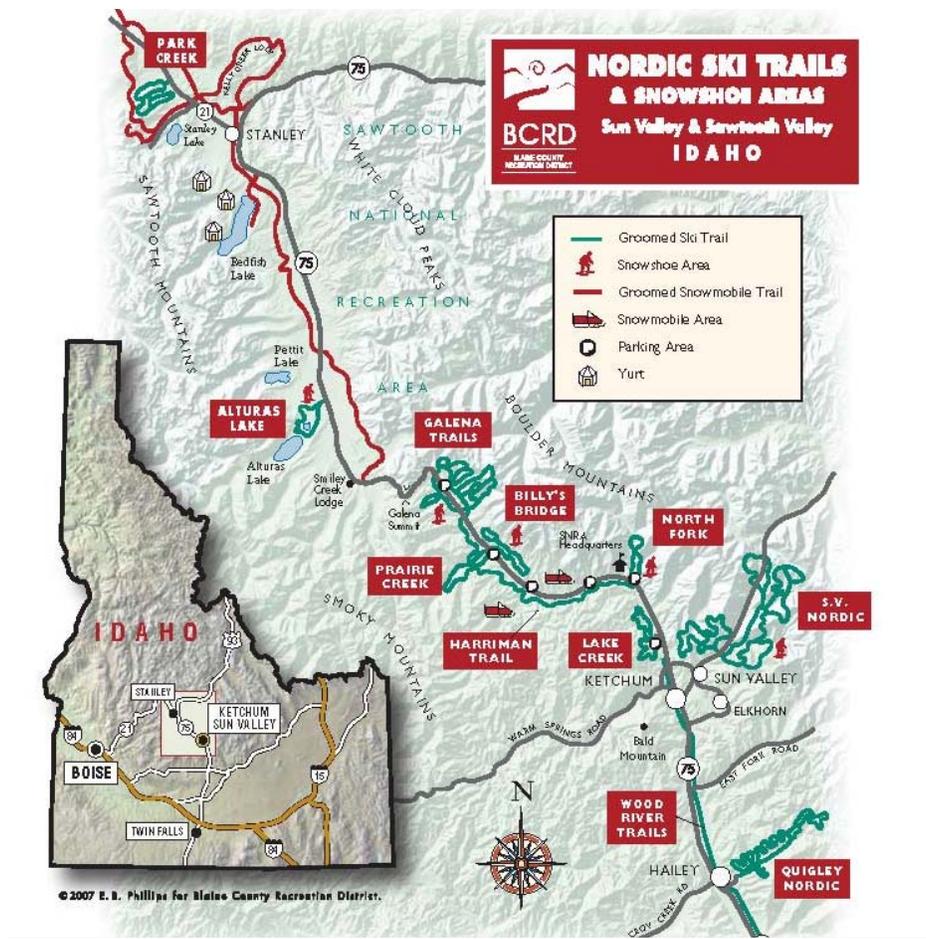


Figure 5: Nordic Ski Trails on the Sawtooth NRA
 (source: Blaine County Recreation District <http://www.bcrd.org/>).

Galena Lodge is a day-use facility located on SH-75 25 miles north of Ketchum and 17 miles north of the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters that serves as the hub for recreational users of the area. The Lodge was purchased by BCRD entirely through community donations and, along with the North Valley Trails, is operated by the BCRD under a Ski Area Term Special Use Permit effective through 2014. BCRD maintains and grooms the North Valley Trails, sells day and season trail passes, and oversees the concessionaires hired to run the Galena Lodge. Trail passes use an honor code, reinforced by volunteer Courtesy Patrollers, who periodically ask to see people’s passes and inform people without how to obtain one. Of the 235 respondents to the 2008 North Valley Trails survey, an annual survey by BCRD, 88% held a season pass but 16% did not interact with a Courtesy Patroller. Sales from the seasonal trail passes (75%) and day trail passes (25%) provide 65% of the operating costs for BCRD; the rest is derived through fund-raising. The high percentage of season pass holders and the high frequency of visitation indicates that most Nordic skiers are local: 50% reported going multiple times a week, 70% reported going any day of the week, and 46% reported going during the middle of the day (11am-1pm—the “lunch crowd”).

The City of Stanley and Redfish Lake are major summer destinations that draw visitors from both Ketchum/Sun Valley and Boise. The area provides access to the Sawtooth Wilderness area via a series of trailheads, including one accessible from Redfish Lake. The City of Stanley provides accommodations for visitors to the Sawtooth NRA and for participants in the river rafting excursions that launch from Stanley. Redfish Lake is the most popular destination in the Sawtooth Forest for boating and other water activities, although Alturas and Petit Lakes also attract visitors. Redfish Lake is located five miles south of Stanley and 55 miles north of Ketchum. The Redfish Lake Recreation Complex consists of two lakes, campgrounds, the Redfish Lake Lodge. The Lodge is privately owned and managed and operates under a Forest Service Special Use Permit. It is open seasonally from late May to late September and includes a restaurant, gas station, boat dock, and 41 overnight cabin and lodge units that can accommodate up to 176 guests. The 165 designated campsites at Redfish Lake are also extremely popular, and are typically filled to capacity during July and August. In winter, snowmobiling is the main activity for both the City of Stanley and Redfish Lake, with limited cross-country skiing. Visitation is anticipated to increase with improvements being made to avalanche management along SH-21, as discussed below.

Existing Transit

Wood River Valley has historically been serviced by three transit organizations – Ketchum Area Rapid Transit (KART), Peak Bus, and Wood River Rideshare.

Ketchum Area Rapid Transit (KART) began in 1980 with the formation of the Ketchum-Sun Valley Public Transportation Authority, a joint authority of the cities of Sun Valley and Ketchum. According to the 2004 Field Report, sales tax revenues from the two cities were used to partially fund KART; the other 50 percent came from a federal matching formula. KART served Ketchum and Sun Valley, including Bald Mountain, and was used by many visitors who arrived by airplane and did not have access to personal vehicles. Following precedent established by other Western ski towns, such as Aspen and Vail, Colorado, and Park City, Utah, KART did not charge a fare. KART operated a fleet of 10, 30-foot buses on three types of schedules to accommodate seasonal fluctuations in ridership demand. The winter ridership accounted for 75 percent of the annual total; summer ridership (Memorial Day to Labor Day) was 15 percent, and shoulder seasons accounted for the remaining 10 percent. KART also provided demand-responsive services to seniors and persons with disabilities with two lift-equipped vans. In 2000, KART had an annual ridership of 378,000.

Wood River Rideshare began in November 2000 with a ride-matching service and employer outreach program. Other programs and services provided were emergency ride home, ride matching, vanpool, Commuter Choice Tax Benefits Program, Community Bike Group, Safe Routes to School and the Smart Moves Community Challenge.

Peak Bus was launched in 2002 by Blaine County and Wood River Rideshare to provide affordable commuting to the working community between Bellevue and Ketchum and

reduce traffic congestion on the highway corridor. It leased buses from Sun Valley Express, a private bus line that provides transportation between Sun Valley and Boise.

In the spring of 2006, KART and Peak Bus merged. Then, in the summer of 2007, Wood River Rideshare merged with KART/Peak Bus to become **Mountain Rides Transportation Authority (Mountain Rides)**. Most recently, Mountain Rides merged services with the existing Sun Valley Company bus system and will be operating all of its routes from Sun Valley to Dollar and Bald Mountains for the 2008-9 winter. Mountain Rides offers three fixed-route services (see maps below): the Down Valley Commuter Bus Service, serving Bellevue, Hailey, Ketchum, and Sun Valley; the Around Town Bus, a free service that serves Ketchum, Sun Valley, Elkhorn, Warm Springs, and River Run; and eight vanpool service routes that run from Twin Falls, Shoshone, Jerome and several other locations to Hailey and Ketchum. The Down Valley Commuter Bus Service offers free rides for point-to-point trips within Hailey along the route going north and south (Duval, 2007). In addition to these services, Mountain Rides facilitates ride sharing, offers an emergency ride home program for transit users, and provides paratransit services on demand.

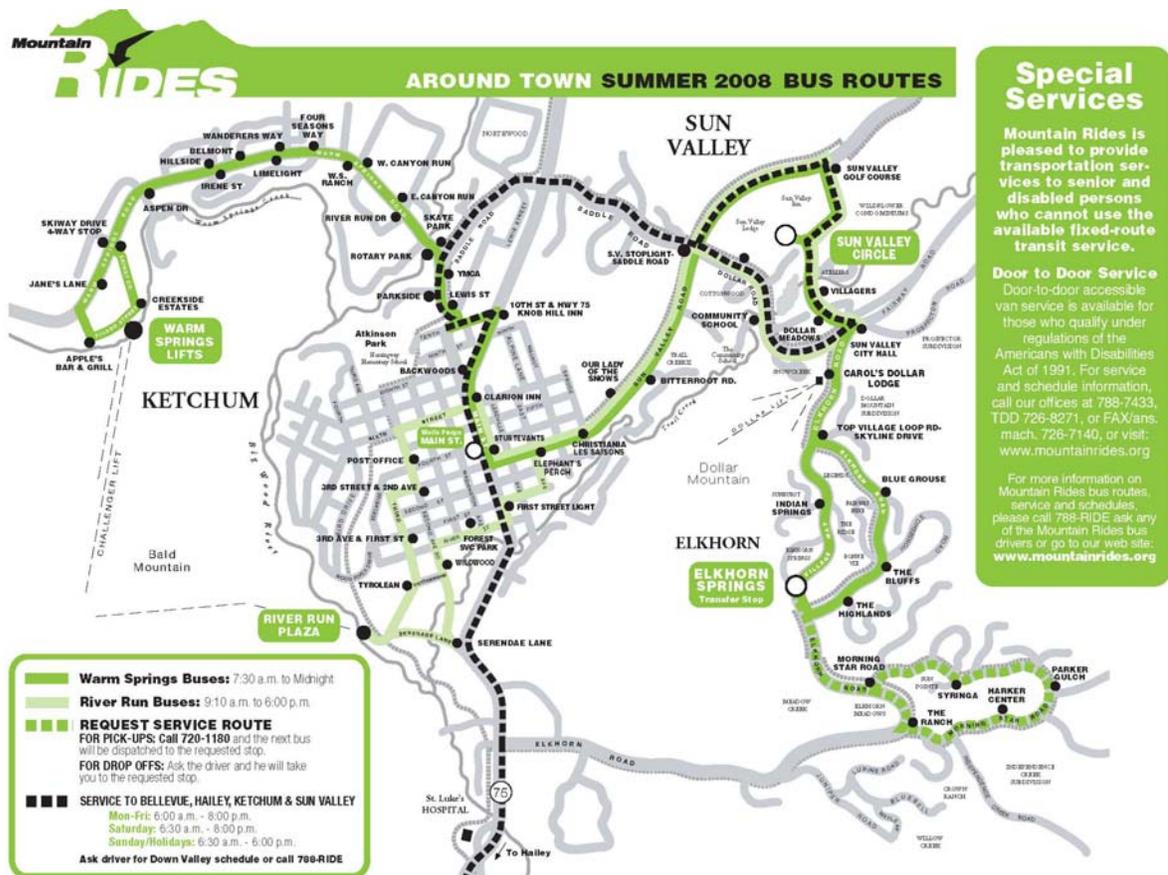


Figure 6: Around Town Bus Route.
 (source: Mountain Rides website)



Figure 7: Down Valley Commuter Bus Route.
 (Source: Mountain Rides website)

	One-way	Round Trip	Pass Pack	Monthly Pass	3-Month Pass	Season Pass (6 months)
Adult	\$3	\$6	\$27	\$72		\$380
Youth/Senior	\$2	\$4	\$18		\$80	
Under 5	Free					
Bike	\$1	\$1	\$1	Free	Free	Free

Figure 8: Down Valley Commuter Fares.
 (source: Mountain Rides website)

11 buses serve the Down Valley and Around Town routes, of which half were manufactured prior to 2000. Mountain Rides provides triple external accommodation for bikes on nearly all of its buses; one bus offers internal bike storage. All buses are active during the week, but there are two 30-passenger buses from the Down Valley service that could be made available for additional service on the weekends, when that route runs less frequently. (Around Town operates on the same schedule all seven days and during winter is completely full.)

In 2008, Down Valley had 7,556 one-way trips in January and 12,992 in July; the Around Town had 37,802 in January and 24,766 in July. These two months are regarded as the two peak months for ridership. Used equally for shopping, recreation, and commuting, the Around Town bus operates at 50% utilization in the summer and higher utilization in winter, with peaks from mid-June to Labor Day and again from Christmas to late February or early March. Other than picking people directly up from hotels and resorts, the Around Town has been very successful in providing service to a park-and-ride facility at the YMCA parking lot for day skiers to Bald Mountain. All services have experienced growth from 2007 to 2008: vanpools increased from 3 to 8; Down Valley trips increased 105% (from 4,622 in May 2007 to 9,628 in May 2008). (Sentilles, 2008)

The vanpool is self-funded by monthly fees (ranging from \$150-190) paid by riders and relies on volunteer drivers. The breakdown of funding for the Down Valley and Around Town services are illustrated in the pie charts below; Down Valley achieves 25-28% fare recovery (fare information is provided above in Figure 8).

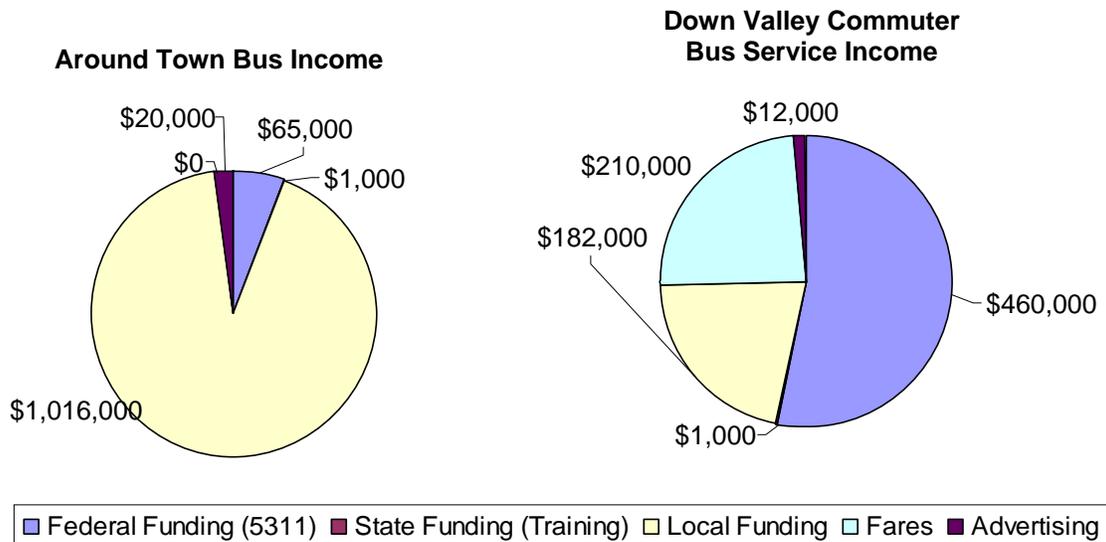


Figure 9: Income for the Around Town Bus and Down Valley Commuter Bus.
(source: Mountain Rides)

A table of costs for January and July 2008 is shown below; assuming the other months are similar, the yearly operational costs are approximately \$2 million (\$1.5 million for the Around Town Bus, \$0.5 million for the Down Valley Bus), but this most likely

overestimates since January and July are the peak seasons when the most service is offered.

Month	January		July	
	Around Town	Down Valley	Around Town	Down Valley
Operating Costs	\$62.50		\$70	
Hours	2356	647	1597	695
Total monthly cost	\$147,250	\$40,437.50	\$111,790	\$48,650

Figure 10: Operating costs for Mountain Rides 20007

(source: Mountain Rides)

The various transit organizations that have served Wood River Valley have received federal funds from FTA in two general ways: directly from FTA, which are typically capital grants, and through the state (from FTA), which are typically operating funds. Capital grants include FTA’s New Starts and Small Smarts program (5309), which provides capital assistance for new and replacement buses and facilities, modernization of existing rail systems, and new fixed guideway systems; Mountain Rides currently has \$230,000 of existing 5309 funds to use to replace existing equipment, with a match provided from its capital fund. Operating funds are provided through FTA’s Rural and Small Urban Areas formula program (5311), which is based on a state’s nonurbanized population and land area and is intended to support transportation in areas with populations of less than 50,000. Figure 1 shows federal funding amounts to the Wood River Valley transit organizations since 2002.

Year	FTA	Purpose	State
2002	\$403,000	to purchase 2 buses	
2004	\$926,000	to construct the maintenance facility	
	\$669,000	to purchase 3 buses	
2005			\$173,000
2006	\$282,000	to purchase 1 bus and 10 bus shelters	\$625,000
2007	\$455,000	to build a park and ride	\$450,000
2008			\$508,000
TOTAL	\$2,735,000		\$1,756,000

Figure 11: Federal and state funding 2002-2008 for Wood River Valley transit.

(source: FTA Region 10)

Local funding comes from Hailey, Bellevue, and Blaine County for the Down Valley Commuter Bus (Hailey’s contribution also funds the free zone), and from Ketchum and Sun Valley for the Around Town service. For Ketchum and Sun Valley, local funding comes from the local option tax (LOT), which in Ketchum is a 2% charge on lodging and liquor by the glass and 1% on building materials and other retail sales; in Sun Valley, the LOT is a 3% charge on lodging and retail sales. There are exceptions to both LOTs (e.g., groceries and medical spending). In Ketchum, two-thirds of LOT receipts are generated

by visitors, while in Sun Valley, 95% are. In 2007, the LOT contribution to Mountain Rides was approximately 30% of the total LOT revenues collected by Ketchum and Sun Valley. Mountain Rides is in discussion with both cities about the possibility of charging a fare for the Around Town Bus.

In addition, the Blaine County Recreation District (BCRD) ran the **North Valley-Galena Express** from Ketchum to Galena Lodge during the winter (December through March) from the 2002-03 through the 2005-06 seasons. The service went through many variations in terms of vehicle, schedule, route, and fare. In 2002-03, the first year, the service ran Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday in December and January; Saturday was added in late January. Nearly 1,000 people rode the Express that winter, averaging 22 people a day. (Stahl, 2003) In 2004-05, service was provided for \$5 round-trip from Wednesday through Saturday, with 10am departures and 2pm returns (see schedule and stops in table below); January 9 through 30, service was extended to Sunday, mainly to serve locals and participants in the Wells Fargo Boulder Mountain Tour (Baer 2004).

Ketchum-Galena northbound mornings

10:00 Elephant's Perch - Sun Valley Rd.
10:05 1st & East Ave Park & Ride
10:10 Sturtevant's - N. Main St.
10:12 Backwoods - N. Main St.
10:15 Knob Hill Inn - N. Main St.
10:30 Sawtooth NRA Headquarters
10:40 Baker Creek Parking Lot
10:45 Billy's Bridge
10:55 Arrive Galena Lodge

Galena - Ketchum southbound afternoons

2:00 Depart Galena Lodge
2:10 Billy's Bridge
2:15 Baker Creek Parking Lot
2:25 Sawtooth NRA Headquarters
2:35 Knob Hill Inn - N. Main St.
2:40 Backwoods - N. Main St.
2:45 Chamber Visitor Center - N. Main St.
2:50 1st & East Ave Park & Ride
2:55 Elephant's Perch - Sun Valley Rd.

SORRY, NO PETS

Figure 12: Schedule and Stops for North Valley-Galena Express.

Source: Sawtooth National Forest website

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sawtooth/recreation/galenaex.htm>

(linked from: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/sawtooth/recreation/xcountrysnra.htm>)

According to the project manager, Cathy Baer, for 2004-05 the North Valley-Galena Express cost \$250 for each northbound run. At full capacity, each shuttle could hold 45 passengers, for a total in fare potential of \$225 (\$5 round-trip). The difference in cost was underwritten by local businesses (Baer 2005); local sponsors included Atkinson's Markets, Backwoods Mtn. Sports, East Avenue Bistro, Knob Hill Inn, The Perch, Sturtevant's, Mortgage Associates, Sun Valley Trekking, the YMCA, Lost River Sports, Valley Paving, Pam Goetz of Re/Max, and Express Printing. In addition, the four special Sunday runs were sponsored by Backwoods Mtn. Sports, The Perch, Sun Valley Master Skiers Association, and Lallman, Feltman Peterson & Co. (Baer 2004) A March 1, 2006, posting online at sunvalleyonline.com, listed the shuttle operating Wednesday through Sunday, with a 10am Ketchum departure, 11am Galena arrival, and 3pm Galena departure. It is currently advertised as free and running Wednesday through Friday on the Sawtooth National Forest website, linked to from the National Recreation Area Cross-Country Ski Trails page.

The BCRD provided an initial budget for the 2005-6 service (see Figure 13 below), which assumed a \$2-3 fare per person per trip and about 10k of loss, which BCRD would cover. Actual net loss was estimated at closer to 15k as some of the "other" revenue sources like "advertising sales" did not pan out. The loss was covered 100% through fundraising by the BCRD.

Revenue	
Rider Fees	\$2,500
Advertising Sales	\$2,500
Donations	\$250
Galena Lodge Donation	-
Sawtooth Trails Donation	\$500
Sun Valley Co. Donation	\$500
<i>Total Revenue</i>	<i>\$6,250</i>
Expenses	
Bus (21-passenger)	\$12,000 (50 days @ 1 run/day @ \$240/day)
Street banner (Ketchum)	\$100
Bus stop signs	\$100
Schedule – Mountain Express	-
Wildlife Walks	\$1,175
Maps (10,000)	\$2,060
Map Design	\$400
Satellite phone	\$250
<i>Total Expenses</i>	<i>\$16,085</i>
Net Surplus (Deficit)	(\$9,835) (Funded by BCRD)

Figure 13: Estimated budget for 2005-6 for the North Valley-Galena Express.
(source: BCRD)

According to the current concessionaires, Galena Lodge itself has explored some transportation options in the past, including running their own bus system and investigating whether contracting with a local cab company to operate a 15-passenger van 2 to 4 trips per day would be viable. The latter was deemed to be a reasonable venture, but the Lodge was not able to raise the funding to operate the shuttle all winter.

Three other private transportation companies of note in the area are **Sawtooth Transportation, Inc.**, based in Stanley, **Sun Valley Express**, based in Sun Valley, and **Sun Valley Stages**, based in Twin Falls. Sawtooth Transportation offers vehicle shuttles, shuttle service, rental car return, and van charters for rafters, hikers, and group events, including hotel and airport transportation. However, it was able to offer van charters but not vehicle shuttles for the summer of 2008 due to issues with its property in Stanley. Raft outfitters and guide companies in Stanley also use bus and van fleets to transport their customers. Sun Valley Express offers year-round ground transportation between Boise and Sun Valley Resort as well as shuttle and bus charters, with a fleet of over 100. Sun Valley Stages will be offering a twice-daily shuttle from the Boise airport to the Sun Valley Resort from December 19, 2008 thru March 30, 2009 for \$50 each way.

Future Transit Opportunities

There are a number of transit opportunities that are currently being explored or are possibilities for the future. For example, Mountain Rides may be able to use existing equipment to pilot or supplement a new or extended route; however, available existing equipment (two 30-passenger buses) is only available on weekends. Operating costs still remain an issue, and such additional use would imply that those vehicles would need additional maintenance and/or need to be replaced sooner. Mountain Rides is already hoping to expand service by offering a similar service to the Around Town bus in Ketchum/Sun Valley in Hailey in the future and a commuter service from Twin Falls north. The latter project may be able to be funded by FTA's Job Access / Reserve Commute (JARC) Program. Mountain Rides and Blaine County are actively involved in a statewide planning effort, Idaho's Mobility and Access Pathway (IMAP) initiative, which incorporates a coordination and mobility plan to address socioeconomic barriers, commuting and access issues that is required to be eligible for FTA's New Freedom Program (5317) and JARC Program.

In addition, Mountain Rides currently has plans to build a storage and maintenance facility to the south of Ketchum (either Hailey or Bellevue) so as to be able to store all of its vehicles and have room for expansion. Currently, Mountain Rides pays for storage of two vehicles. Mountain Rides also plans to develop a transit hub in downtown Ketchum which would allow for easy transfers between routes.

Existing Transportation Projects

There are a number of Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and USFS projects underway that are important for understanding the current transportation issues and

possible solutions. A list of all 2009-2013 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) projects that relate to the Sawtooth area is below but this section will provide details only on those that are most significant and relevant.

Number	Road	Name	Purpose	County	Cost (\$K)	Year
H6080	SH75	Yankee Fork Ranger Station to E	Resurfacing/Restoration, Paving R&R	Custer	\$2,440	2013
07699	SH75	Shoshone, North	Major widening and Bridge Replacement	Lincoln	\$12,659	2009
06656	FH26	Warm Springs	Realignment Reconstruction/R Gr&Dr	Custer	\$8,800	2011
06493	SH75	Warm Springs	Realignment Reconstruction/R Gr&Dr	Custer	\$3,922	2013
07799	SH75	Slate Creek Bridge	Bridge Replacement	Custer	\$7,500	2009
09111	SH75	Galena Summit Slide	Safety Improvement	Blaine	\$200	2010
07836	SH75	Timberway to Hospital Drive	Reconstruction/R R/Wonly	Blaine	\$27,158	2012
11476	SH75	MP105 to Bellevue	Resurface/Rest PavR&R	Blaine	\$2,269	2012

Figure 14: Relevant FY 2009-13 STIP transportation projects
(source: FY 2009-13 STIP)

The largest project currently underway in the region is the SH-75 expansion project, which will run 27 miles from Timmerman Junction, south of Bellevue, to Saddle Road at the north end of Ketchum. Currently, there are significant congestion and traffic issues between Bellevue and Ketchum during rush hour because of the volume of commuters. USFS staff reported that driving the 18 miles can take an hour. Plans identified in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) include widening the highway between Bellevue and Ketchum to four travel lanes with a center turn lane and shoulders, and widening the highway between Timmerman Junction and Bellevue to one lane in each direction plus passing lanes. ITD has reassured the public that an HOV lane and bus stop accommodations are still being considered. In August 2008, the Federal Highway Administration signed a record of decision for the project’s EIS, ending an eight-year study of environmental and historical impacts of the project. ITD currently has about \$22 million available to start work on the project, which is estimated to cost about \$200 million, and has indicated that the first steps will be to hire design consultants, conduct aerial surveys of the roadway and put together a right-of-way acquisition plan. (“Record of decision,” 2008; “Idaho 75 Timmerman To Ketchum,” 2008)

Two related projects are the upgrade of the Timmerman Rest Area and the 8-mile expansion of SH-75 north of Shoshone toward Timmerman Hill, the terminus of the expansion above, to two lanes in each direction.

In the Stanley area, there are two large highway projects that have effected or will effect access to the Sawtooth NRA; the first has resulted in improved access from the west (Boise) and the second may temporarily restrict access to the east (Challis).

As mentioned above, one of the routes to the Sawtooth NRA, and a popular winter recreational route for snowmobilers from Boise, is SH-21. According to an ITD news release in May 2008, avalanche-related closures on SH-21 typically occur 60 days per year, but in 2007-08, that number was reduced to 30 days despite the second-highest number of avalanche-related road blocks. The significant reduction was due to a new management program by ITD in which explosives are used to bring down unstable snow before it can slide and block the highway. ITD has committed to continuing the program, and Stanley hopes that reduced closures and better information and predictions about closures will increase the number of winter visitors. This issue was one of the critical infrastructure issues identified under Economic and Community Stability in the report, *Sawtooth Vision 20/20: Shared Strategies for the Future of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area*, in May of 2007.

The other project that affects Stanley is to the east; ITD is proposing to reconstruct a bridge on SH-75 over the Salmon River near Slate Creek, east of Stanley toward Challis. This bridge is vital to east/west travel between Stanley and Challis and rafting companies rely heavily on being able to both use it for transportation and to safely pass under it while rafting. There is significant concern over the timing and duration of construction and its impact on the rafting and overall tourism industry.

Transportation Issues/Problems

After reviewing existing conditions at the Sawtooth NRA and surrounding area, the TAG team identified the following transportation issues of importance in analyzing the need for and success of potential solutions involving alternative transportation systems.

Sawtooth NRA/Sawtooth National Forest

Growth in Visitation & Population

Demands on transportation facilities to access outdoor recreation areas is increasing with the boom in population in the Mountain West. According to the 2004 Field Report, between 1990 and 2000, the Mountain states, including Idaho, grew faster than any other region in the country. Idaho, for example, grew by nearly 30 percent to 1.3 million residents while the country as a whole grew by 13 percent. According to the Idaho Department of Commerce, Blaine County's population grew 40% between 1990 and 2000 and an additional 13% between 2000 and 2006. Custer County's population increased 5% between 1990 and 2000 but declined almost 4% by 2006.

In terms of population growth in local cities, between 1990 and 2004, Ketchum's population increased by 25%, Stanley's increased by 37%, and Hailey's population doubled. Boise, a major source of Sawtooth NRA visitors, was one of the fastest growing cities in the nation between 1990 and 2004, growing by approximately 50 percent to nearly 200,000 residents.

In addition, there are a number of residential and hotel developments in the pipeline for the Wood River Valley. These include three high-end hotel projects for Ketchum: a 73-room, four-star hotel (Hotel Ketchum) with restaurant, bar, and retail; a 75-room, five-star hotel with 110 residential condominiums, 27 town homes, 25 villas, and workforce housing for 152 (The Warm Springs Resort); and a 70-room hotel with 26 residential units, spa, restaurant, and retail (Ketchum Lodge). (Evans 2008). The Gun Club Development, in Sun Valley, will consist of 30 single-family homes and 330 condominium units (Duval 2008). Sun Valley Co., the largest landowner in Sun Valley, is actively implementing its 2005 10-year Master Plan for both Bald Mountain and Dollar Mountain, which includes ski area expansion, mountain access upgrades and expanded snowmaking installations. The resort is also planning two new hotels (Sun Valley).

Visitor Travel Information and Signage

Currently, there is a need for better "gateway" visual cues and informational opportunities at the entrances to the Sawtooth NRA and at the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters. The three main motor-vehicle access routes to the Sawtooth NRA are along SH-75 (south and northeast entrances) and along Highway 21 (northwest entrance). In addition, brochures and other materials could be clearer in indicating the location of interpretive sites and trails and describing what they offer, and signs along SH-75 could provide more advance notice. The Sawtooth NRA does offer an informative audio tape tour that narrates the trip from Stanley to Ketchum with mile-post cues and invitations to stop at interpretive sites.

Visual Resource Concerns

ITD has mined gravel in several parts of the Sawtooth NRA for highway maintenance, repair and construction since the inception of the state highway system. Recently Section 16, T 8 N, R 14 E, and Boise Meridian (4th of July Creek) was opened and used for an ITD construction project (see map below). Other sites are being investigated that include sites on Idaho Department of Lands (IDOL) property and Sawtooth NRA property. One IDOL site that is being actively investigated by ITD is Section 36, T 10 N, R 13 E, and Boise Meridian (Buckhorn) (see map) and should it be mined has been identified by the Sawtooth NRA as a site that would have a negative impact on the visual resources of the Sawtooth NRA. The Forest is working on a land exchange with the IDOL to prevent development of the Buckhorn site.

ITD Gravel Pits

Sawtooth National Recreation Area
Sawtooth National Forest

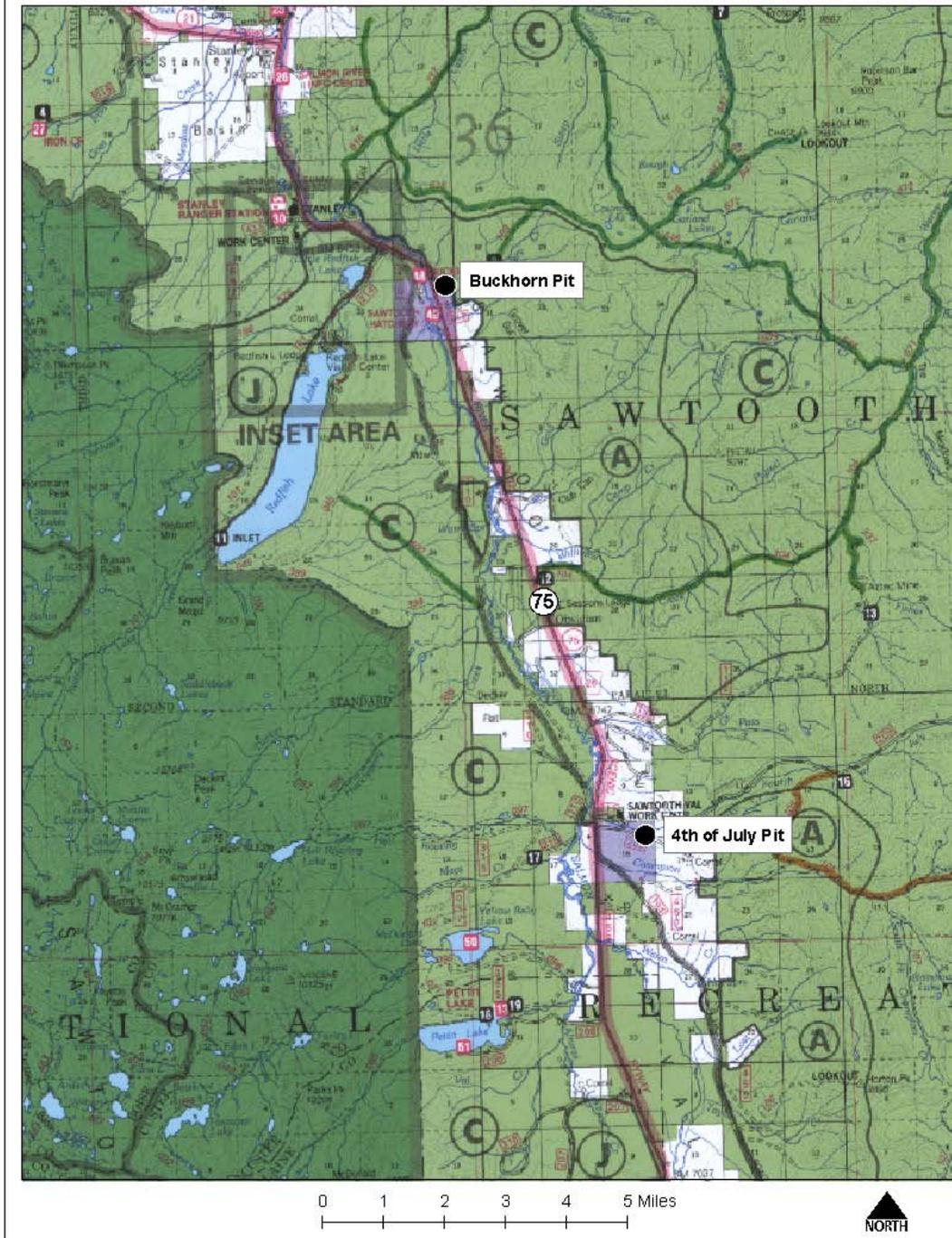


Figure 15: Map of gravel mining sites.

Distribution of visitation

Visitation in summer and winter is concentrated in certain areas of the Forest and Sawtooth NRA, leaving other areas less heavily utilized. Winter visitation is concentrated in the Wood River Valley, in particular the Sun Valley/Ketchum area, the North Valley Trails, and Galena Lodge. Winter use is also concentrated in the Sawtooth Valley near Smiley Creek and at Stanley but in much lower numbers than on the Wood River side. Both the Fairfield and Minadoka Districts have alpine skiing opportunities and snowmobile areas that attract significant winter use also. In summer, visitation is concentrated at Redfish Lake, Alturas Lake, the southern portion of Wood River Valley. There are opportunities to increase visitation in underutilized areas for each season (City of Stanley/Redfish Lake in the winter, the Sawtooth NRA as a whole in the summer, and the North Valley Trails in both summer and winter).

Safety

The speed limit for most of SH-75 is 65 mph, but those using SH-75 as a transportation corridor often exceed that limit. In addition, according to the Forest and NRA staff, many sightseers drive more slowly to enjoy the scenery, creating the potential for dangerous encounters between vehicles going different speeds. According to the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), based on current engineering studies that take into account traffic volumes, accidents, sight distance, passing opportunities, and other information there is no indication of conflicts under the current conditions. All speed limits on state highways are required by law to be set through an engineering study and the current speed limit was set through that process.

Highway speed in the Galena Lodge area has been of particular concern for Forest and NRA staff, as well as BCRD and Galena Lodge staff, for many years. Staff have expressed concern about the southbound traffic and winter weekends when skiers, kids, and pets are crossing SH-75 at Galena Lodge and vehicles, including trucks towing snowmobiles, are traveling to and from Sawtooth Valley. ITD conducted an engineering speed study for SH-75 near the Galena Lodge on Wednesday, July 21, 2004, in response to a request for a speed limit reduction due to safety concerns from a frequent visitor to the Lodge. ITD found that the average speed was 46 mph and a 90th percentile of 53 mph and concluded that sight distance was adequate and that speed limit reduction would probably not be effective in reducing vehicle speeds in the area. It may be useful to conduct a similar study in the winter on a busy weekend and to think of measures other than a speed limit reduction to address the safety concerns effectively.

Wood River Valley

Parking

USFS staff and stakeholders report that parking is a significant issue in winter in a number of different ways. On many weekends the volume of visitors completely fills the parking capacity at some popular locations. Roadside parking for back-country skiing is also limited and sometimes a constraint. There is also little motor vehicle parking enforcement. Snow obscures parking lines, often leading to inefficient parking practices,

and although snow clearing within parking lots attempts to maximize available parking, in some locations capacity may be reduced until the state highway department's rotary blower is available to cast snow clear of the parking area. The Idaho Transportation Department currently provides snow removal at many of the parking sites along SH-75 but removal of snow from SH-75 is ITD's primary responsibility and will take priority. As use of the parking lots and expectations for speedy snow removal increases, creating demands outside of ITD's normal work hours and beyond its capacity, efficient snow removal from these parking lots at some point may not be able to be provided by ITD.

The key parking capacity concerns are Galena Lodge, roadside parking areas between Galena Lodge and Sawtooth NRA Headquarters, and Sawtooth NRA Headquarters. Galena Lodge's parking lot has approximately 80 spaces, with approximately 25 overflow spaces located across SH-75, the use of which ITD has allowed so far. The current Galena Lodge concessionaires report that parking is almost always an issue on winter weekends at the Lodge and at many of the roadside parking areas on SH-75 but that there is not a parking problem on weekdays. Roadside parking areas and the approximate number of vehicles each can accommodate include Prairie Creek (20), Billy's Bridge (20), Frostbite Flats (10), Spruce Meadows (5), Baker Creek (25), Easley (15), Cathedral (15), and Durance Peak (5). The Sawtooth NRA Headquarters, which has about 50 spaces during the winter, and nearby North Fork Loop is limited in spaces as well and are the location of the most popular trailheads during the winter. Finally, the Lake Creek Trails, maintained by the Bureau of Land Management and located south of the NRA but north of Ketchum in the Ketchum Ranger District, has a capacity of approximately 30 vehicles.

It is important to note that there currently is little documentation of the parking problem. For example, the 2004-2005 NVUM, limited as described above, reported that on average across the Forest, visitors were satisfied (4.4 out of 5) with both parking availability and parking lot condition (for parking availability, over 50% of day-use visitors to developed sites reported being very satisfied, 30% reported being satisfied, and less than 10% reported being dissatisfied; feedback on parking lot condition was identical except only 5% reported being dissatisfied).

However, although parking is at capacity in some locations on many winter weekends, the trails themselves could accommodate more use. Capacity is very hard to measure for a cross-country ski resort but Blaine County Recreation District has found that the capacity-limiting factor is parking, not trails.

According to Blaine County Recreation District's survey, there were 3,000 season-pass holders and 6000 day-pass purchases; season-pass holders on average claim about 25 visits to trails during the season. This adds up for 81,000 visits total; some of these visits are outside the Sawtooth NRA (mainly to the Quigley Nordic Trails in Hailey). These visits include both Nordic skiers and showshoers. BCRD does have plans to increase visitation. For the last 2 years, it has offered a combo season pass with the Sun Valley Company that allows access to both trail systems with one pass; about 115 season-pass holders have purchased the combo passes. This year, BCRD is hoping to have combo

multiple-day passes with the Sun Valley Company as well. This would allow locals and also tourists of the Sun Valley Resort to access multiple trail systems over either a 2 or 3 day time period. However, users would need to have a way to access the North Valley Trails from Sun Valley/Ketchum.

Distribution of visitation

As mentioned above, visitation in summer and winter is concentrated in several areas, leaving other areas less utilized, and this is true within the Wood River Valley as well as the Sawtooth NRA and Forest as a whole. Winter visitation is often concentrated in the Sun Valley/Ketchum area itself, and within the Sawtooth NRA, on the North Valley Trails at Galena Lodge, Baker Creek, and along the Wood River Trails. In summer, visitation is highest in Sun Valley/Ketchum and on the Wood River Valley Trails. There is an opportunity in both summer and winter to increase access to and visitation of the North Valley Trails and Sawtooth NRA Headquarters.

Visitor Access

A number of visitors to the Wood River Valley arrive by plane and then take a bus or taxi to their lodging. The current Galena Lodge concessionaires report that they have received numerous calls from Sun Valley Lodge guests who would like to come to the Lodge or the Sawtooth NRA in general but cannot get there. Even those able and willing to access the Sawtooth NRA by bicycle or skiing must use the road between the end of the Wood River Valley trail and the start of the Harriman Trail (a distance of about 6 miles). Most riders and skiers prefer to first drive to Sawtooth NRA Headquarters or other areas to access the Harriman Trail directly. Access is primarily an issue for those visitors interested in nonmotorized recreation who do not have access to a vehicle; however, it can also extend to those with vehicles when visitors are interested in different start and end points for hiking or skiing and have difficulty finding a return trip to their vehicle, and in the winter if it is a busy weekend and difficult to find safe, convenient parking.

Safety

The nonmotorized crossings of SH-75 at Galena Lodge and Sawtooth NRA Headquarters for the Harriman Trail pose safety issues in the winter (skiing) and summer (mountain biking). In addition, in the summer, road bikes that ride on SH-75 from Ketchum to Galena Summit must negotiate narrow or no shoulders once the paved Wood River Valley trail ends before the Sawtooth NRA entrance. Even mountain bikes following the same route but making use of the Harriman Trail must ride on the road because of the gap between the Wood River Valley and Harriman Trails. Parking congestion also creates a safety issue: vehicles parked on roadside parking lots often extend into the road. In addition, turnout safety is an issue at these lots as well as at Galena Lodge and Sawtooth City, further to the north. These concerns were raised in the 2001 Sawtooth Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. The Blaine County Recreation District (BCRD) submitted comments to the ITD requesting an 8 foot shoulder along Highway 75 to accommodate road bikes between Ketchum and Galena Summit.

Dog Access and Accommodation

Dogs are an important part of life in the Sun Valley/Ketchum area. People take dogs to work and people ski with dogs. Blaine County Recreation District offers 40km of groomed trails that allow dogs, and BCRD sells dog season passes; in BCRD's 2007-08 North Valley Trails survey, 37% of respondents reported skiing with their dogs—more than reported skiing by themselves (28%) or with another adult (33%). However, Mountain Rides currently does not allow any animals on their existing services, with the exception of service animals. Other than requiring accommodation of service animals, the FTA does not have a policy regarding transporting animals on transit and instead allows the local transit operator to develop its own policy for what is needed to meet the public need in their area. If dog accommodation could be made on existing or future transit in the Wood River Valley, it is possible that the service would gain riders who own dogs and otherwise would not use the service.

City of Stanley/Redfish Lake

Evacuation; incident/medical response

There is only one access road to Redfish Lake, raising concern about the ability to evacuate the area quickly and safely and to allow for access by emergency vehicles.

Carrying Capacity

The City of Stanley/Redfish Lake area faces a number of capacity issues that are important to consider in deciding to increase access to the area. Stanley faces a lack of lodging options as year-round businesses continue to be a challenge and property owners are converting beds to private homes. Redfish Lake may be near capacity for visitation in terms of protecting prime sockeye rearing habitat, quality of visitor experience, and other environmental and infrastructure resources. A carrying capacity analysis of the Redfish Lake recreation complex has not been conducted, however visitor circulation within the complex is currently being evaluated as part of an effort to design improved visitor access opportunities.

Safety

Redfish Lake Road and Redfish Point Campground Road are the primary travel routes accessing all of the facilities within the Redfish Lake Recreation Complex. Both are Forest Development Roads managed and maintained by the Forest Service. Under Forest Service Travel Management regulations, the Redfish-area roads are open to highway-legal motorized vehicles. Multiple modes share both the internal roads and the main access road at Redfish Lake. The only way for campers, whether on foot, biking, or driving, to travel between campgrounds and the lake, lodge, beach, and other sites, is by the roads. The connection between Redfish Lake and Sunny Gulch Campground, across SH-75, is particularly difficult to make when not in a vehicle. Similarly, the only connection from Redfish Lake to Stanley, five miles away, is by SH-75. Due to a funded capital investment project to replace the two bridges along the road, there may be an opportunity to re-route and improve Redfish Lake Road to improve safety around a significant turn in the route and to include nonmotorized accommodation or coordinate with any proposed nonmotorized routes.

Parking

Parking capacity is an issue at the beach at Redfish Lake; the main public parking for the beaches is also at the lodge, thus creating competition between lodge guests and day-use visitors. The parking configuration at the lodge also raises safety concerns with the interaction of vehicles, bicycles, and children. However, there is an existing plan to reconfigure the parking lot to move parking spaces away from the lake front and to create a safer environment. Parking is also limited at another popular day use access point, the North Shore Picnic Area. The Redfish visitor circulation analysis is investigating the potential for increased parking capacity at North Shore Picnic Area and in the lodge area.

Visitor Access

As mentioned above, the only access to Redfish Lake is along a two-lane narrow access road and the only access from Stanley to Redfish Lake is along SH-75. There are no other options for nonmotorized access. Campers at Sunny Gulch, the campground across SH-75, must cross SH-75 and use the single access road to reach the beach, lodge, and other Redfish Lake sites. Similarly, campgrounds at Redfish Lake must use the single access road to access these same sites.

There is a proposal in place for a nonmotorized route (the Orion trail) between Redfish Lake and Stanley that would offer both external access and internal circulation benefits. The easement and land for a trailhead and parking in Stanley for such a route is in place, as well as a \$90,000 grant for an access road to the proposed Stanley trailhead, but there is need for funding and staffing to finalize the plan and complete the environmental compliance process.



Figure 16: View of proposed nonmotorized route to Redfish Lake from the City of Stanley from the trailhead in Stanley.

(source: picture taken during TAG site visit on 8/20/08)



Figure 17: Proposed nonmotorized route between Redfish Lake and the City of Stanley (rough approximation of route).
(source: Google Maps and sketch from maps provided by USFS)

Analysis and Recommendations

After reviewing existing and available documents and data and participating in a two-day site visit, the TAG team discussed implications for alternative transportation at the Sawtooth NRA. While the review and observations were necessarily preliminary, due to the time constraints of the TAG, the findings below were used to develop a set of recommendations and next steps.

Findings

There are a number of complementary and competing goals to be considered for this report. The program goals of the Transit in the Parks Program are to improve visitor experience, to decrease congestion and increase visitor access, and to protect environmental, historical, and cultural resources. In Wood River Valley, the transportation issues mostly relate to visitor experience, congestion, and access issues, although environmental resource protection will be an important consideration as use and access increase and historical and cultural resources may not be sufficiently accessible. In Redfish Lake, the major issue is balancing environmental resource protection of salmon spawning habitat with visitor capacity and the visitor experience; nonmotorized safety and access are also concerns. The Sawtooth NRA as a whole wants to improve visitor

experience, achieve fisheries' goals, distribute visitor use and visitation throughout the Sawtooth NRA, increase shoulder season growth, and increase access for people, not vehicles, during peak seasons, as long as the site has the capacity for such an increase.

The region has two separate geographical areas but there is the potential for connection and creation of a total visitor experience. This could involve an alternative transportation system, including one that is focused on providing interpretation. The Sawtooth Scenic Byway could be an integral part of every visitor's experience; according to the NVUMS, 86% of visitors to the NRA reported using the scenic byway, but it is unknown how many drove its entire length. Quantifying the traffic flow between the two areas would be useful. ITD collects information on SH-75 near the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters (see below) that show an annual 24-hour average in 2007 of 1,170, with peaks in July and August of over 2,300 average per day for those months. This number has been steadily decreasing since 2002. However, according to the state traffic flow map for 2007, Stanley only received 860 trips on average per day up from Ketchum. The Stanley Chamber of Commerce reported that 50-80% of rafting day-use visitation is from Ketchum/Sun Valley (7,000-8,000 or so people).

YEAR	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	24-hr Avg.
1990	474	601	645	572	734	1600	2722	2381	1621	938	439	510		1108
1991	563	726	516	473	889	1756	2891	2515	1710	992	461	535		1173
1992	588	759	543	497	934	1844	3037	2665	1812	1108	544	440		1238
1993	448	660	700	581	865	1553	2714	2480	1708	1181	573	592		1176
1994	700	713	844	615	940	1734	2965	2488	1620	1140	553	593		1248
1995	662	951	739	558	655	1529	2846	2655	1817	1159	632	748		1246
1996	708	889	941	626	728	1448	2929	2638	1600	1129	602	579		1235
1997	736	957	888	547	742	1445	2715	2569	1520	1014	589	706		1202
1998	758	910	916	600	695	1432	2738	2568	1677	1022	553	815		1224
1999	911	834	927	602	678	1447	2819	2579	1778	1069	569	985		1267
2000	886	1046	1026	593	775	1673	2901	2393	1509	1048	596	888		1278
2001	955	1047	913	566	972	1775	2867	2639	1691	1143	737	868		1348
2002	949	1173	1070	857	1013	1909	3082	2588	1699	1066	622	720		1396
2003	1069	1068	978	637	768	1645	2576	2428	1538	1142	633	922		1284
2004	899	1020	943	593	809	1620	2754	2335	1669	1043	522	751		1247
2005	921	1047	872	611	777	1450	2695	2217	1487	965	649	924		1218
2006	871	973	829	619	708	1529	2584	2176	1462	963	559	932		1184
2007	852	984	848	524	811	1600	2443	2334	1407	853	529	859		1170
2008	741	901	796	629	584	1372	2285							

Figure 18: ITD Automatic Traffic Counter #28 (SH-75, North of Ketchum).
(source: ITD website)

There is a need to improve the visitor's orientation and visual experience especially in terms of understanding key points of interest (interpretive/historic, natural/scenic, cultural) and providing entrance and exit cues for the Sawtooth NRA. These improvements could take the form of kiosks, an entrance/exit structure, and/or additional or improved signage.

The main route through the Sawtooth NRA has two competing roles, as a scenic byway and as a state highway. It is important that the state highway maintains its function as a transportation corridor but that it is not regarded simply as a state highway that just happens to pass through a scenic area.

The Sawtooth NRA benefits from being adjacent to an area served by a proactive rural transit organization that has solid public support.

Staffing challenges and competing priorities at Sawtooth NRA and Sawtooth National Forest impact the ability for transportation issues to be addressed. Land easement and permit processes, fishery management, and unpredictable fire-response efforts are some of the other activities that demand staff time and resources.

Understanding the capacity of existing resources and facilities – in terms of parking, visitor amenities and infrastructure (e.g., Galena Lodge), and natural resources (e.g., fish hatching areas) – **will be essential in determining whether an ATS solution is appropriate for the Sawtooth NRA.**

Considering the role of transportation in achieving the mission and objectives of the Sawtooth NRA and Sawtooth Forest is necessary groundwork for any future alternative transportation.

The unique socioeconomic structure of the community, in which there are high-end residents and visitors and a workforce that has to commute from far away, will have an impact on transit needs and resources.

Certain visitors – horseback riders and those with ATVs or snowmobiles – will not use transit. Visitor equipment and activities must be kept in mind when considering alternative transportation (skis, bicycles, dogs, etc.).

There are a number of funding programs available for alternative transportation projects in addition to the Transit in the Parks Program. Leveraging existing funds to accomplish new goals and pursue other funding opportunities. Below, some of these programs are listed according to their relevance to Sawtooth NRA and its neighbors:

Funding already received, with potential for more:

- Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
- Idaho Transportation Department
 - Standard highway maintenance and construction
 - Enhancement projects
 - Scenic byways funding
- National Scenic Byways Program
- FTA's New Starts and Small Smarts program (5309)

Funding already received, without potential for more

- FTA's Rural and Small Urban Areas formula program (5311)

Funding not yet received but likely:

- FTA's Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks Program
- FTA's Job Access / Reserve Commute (JARC) Program
- Forest Highway Program (Federal Lands Highway Program)

Funding not yet received, possible, but unlikely:

- FTA New Freedom Program (5317)
- Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities program (5310)

Recommendations

The TAG team developed a set of broad recommendations for the two study subareas and for the Sawtooth NRA and Sawtooth National Forest as a whole.

1) Sawtooth NRA/Sawtooth National Forest

- 1.1) Consider use of the NVUMS to better understand visitation patterns and visitor's experience with transportation options and interest in alternatives.**
- a. **Develop and submit questions for the next NVUMS at Sawtooth Forest and the Sawtooth NRA (2009-10).** NVUMS distributes three versions of a 4-page survey form; one version has expenditure questions, one version has visitor satisfaction questions, and one is blank and open to questions developed and requested by the Forest unit.
 - i. Sawtooth Forest and Sawtooth NRA should provide a list of questions each with a justification to Don English by February 1, 2009. (For possible topics, see 2.4 and 3.2 below).
 - ii. Don will provide feedback and work with the Forest and the NRA on the wording and content.
 - iii. The questions will then go to the Office of Management and Budget for approval.
 - iv. Once the results have been received, the Forest and NRA will be responsible for data entry and analysis of the one page of questions but guidance and support will be provided.
 - b. Request breakdown of visitor patterns by quarter or month. NVUMS is limited by its funding and staff (currently one) to perform detailed analysis but an analysis request could be made to get monthly or quarterly, though there might need to be some funding attached (quarterly would take 1-2 days, monthly would take 4-5 days).
 - c. Obtain a counter(s) for more accurate information. Use a 24 hour counter with 6 hour visual calibration to get exit/entrance ratio at each site. If the Forest has a permanent traffic counter or fare collection system, use those numbers instead.

Funding: USDA Forest Service

Responsible Parties: Sawtooth Forest and NRA
Contacts: Don English, Visitor Use Monitoring Program Manager, USDA Forest Service, (202-205-9595, denglish@fs.fed.us)

1.2) Incorporate transportation planning into forest-level planning activities and documents, such as:

- d. Scenic Byway Corridor Plan
- e. Vision 2020
- f. State LRTP

Once this is done, these documents and others, supplemented by this TAG report, could bolster the pursuit of a Transit in the Parks Program planning grant to provide funding for more comprehensive transportation planning.

Funding: Sawtooth Forest / Transit in the Parks Program
Responsible parties: Sawtooth Forest and Sawtooth NRA
Contacts: Bill Ramos, Region 10, Federal Transit Administration, bill.ramos@dot.gov, 425-208-5882

1.3) Work at the regional level with other Idaho national forests, and with ITD, to discuss the possibility of pursuing enhancement programs available under the Forest Highway Program. Other states have been able to implement byway projects, historic interpretation projects, and gateway portal projects under the Forest Highway Program.

Funding: Forest Highway Program (Federal Lands Highway Program)
Responsible Parties: Sawtooth Forest, ITD, other ID national forests
Resources/Contact Information:

- George Fekaris, Western Federal Lands Highway Division, Federal Highway Administration, George.Fekaris@fhwa.dot.gov, 360-619-7766
- Kay Shurtz, Region 4, USDA Forest Service, kshurtz@fs.fed.us, 801-625-5222

1.4) Improve visitor travel orientation and signage.

Funding: Forest Highway Program (Federal Lands Highway Program), National Scenic Byway Program.

Responsible parties: Sawtooth Forest and Sawtooth NRA

Resources/Contact Information:

- George Fekaris, Western Federal Lands Highway Division, Federal Highway Administration, George.Fekaris@fhwa.dot.gov, 360-619-7766
- Floyd Thompson, National Program for Sustainable Tourism & Scenic Byways, U.S. Forest Service, fthompson02@fs.fed.us, (202) 205-1423

1.5) Continue to develop the existing relationship with Idaho Parks and Recreation (IDPR). The Sawtooth NRA and Sawtooth National Forest have a

good history of IDPR funding support for trail and trailhead reconstruction and improvement, and road and parking area improvements. Continued funding of such work could help accomplish goals discussed in this document.

Funding: IDPR

Responsible parties: Sawtooth Forest and Sawtooth NRA

- 1.6) Encourage and support the current activities of Mountain Rides, Blaine County, and other partners in the development of a “coordinated plan” that will make the area eligible for FTA’s Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC) Program funding.** The plan currently has a target completion date of January 2009 and is part of Idaho’s Mobility and Access Pathway (IMAP) initiative, which requires local mobility management networks to develop coordination plans.

Funding: FTA’s Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC) Program

Responsible parties: Mountain Rides, Blaine County

Contacts: Bill Ramos, Region 10, Federal Transit Administration,
bill.ramos@dot.gov, 425-208-5882

2) Wood River Valley

- 2.1) Apply for a Transit in the Parks Program implementation grant for a 2-year winter shuttle lease and an accompanying evaluation component.**
- a. Pilot shuttle would run for 10 weeks (Christmas-early February) between Ketchum/Sun Valley and Galena.
 - b. Stops would include:
 - i. Location in Ketchum, TBD
 - ii. High-use trailheads between Ketchum and Sawtooth NRA Headquarters: Adams Gulch, Lake Creek, and Fox Creek
 - iii. Sawtooth NRA Headquarters (for employees and for both the Harriman Trail and North Fork Nordic Trail)
 - iv. Cathedral Pines (endpoint of the most popular Nordic skiing stretch according to the BCRD survey)
 - v. Baker Creek (halfway point along Harriman Trail between Sawtooth NRA Headquarters and Galena Lodge)
 - vi. Galena Lodge (for the other end of the Harriman Trail)
 - c. Operating costs would be covered by fares and local private companies (advertising and sponsors)
 - d. Operator
 - i. Special use permit or open bid to private operator to run shuttle between Ketchum and Galena Lodge.
 - ii. Special use permit with BCRD, subcontract with Mountain Rides. Trails pass will include transportation fee.

- e. Evaluation component should include:
 - i. Service (route) planning: include consideration of existing Mountain Rides' routes and possible extensions in terms of serving highest-use areas (e.g., Greenhorn and Boundary Trailheads are highly used but not in alignment with route between Ketchum and Galena Lodge).
 - ii. Financial planning
 - iii. Market analysis
 - iv. Communication/travel information
 - v. Operational Evaluation/Data Collection & Analysis
 - vi. Parking management needs
 - vii. Intelligent transportation system needs
 - viii. Accommodation of dogs on transit (reference example: Mammoth Mountain in California)
 - ix. Evaluation of shuttle stop locations and geometric requirements
 - x. Major entrance and stop signage/facilities
 - xi. Consideration of feasibility and potential of other linkages (e.g. Stanley to Ketchum) and other seasonal runs (summer)

Funding: FTA's Transit in the Parks Program

Responsible Parties: Sawtooth Forest, Sawtooth NRA, Blaine County.

Contacts: Bill Ramos, Region 10, Federal Transit Administration,

bill.ramos@dot.gov, 425-208-5882

Action Steps:

- Request copy of a successful Transit in the Parks application (e.g., Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie).
- Identify staff (internal or external) to develop application and review draft application for submittal by February 1, 2009 (deadline for Transit in the Parks application has not yet been announced but should be January or February)
- Identify applicant and partners. State, tribal, or local governments with jurisdiction over land in the vicinity of the public land, acting with the consent of that federal land management agency, alone or in partnership with other governmental or non-governmental participants, may submit applications directly to the Transit in the Parks Program as long as the application is accompanied by a letter from the affected public land unit.
- Develop a proposed budget for the pilot based on the 2005-06 budget provided by BCRD above and estimates from Mountain Rides; see outline below.

Revenue	
Rider Fees	\$8,750 (\$2 per rider one-way x 6 per hour x 13 weeks x 7 days x 8 hours per day)
Advertising Sales	\$
Donations	\$
Sawtooth NRA/Forest	\$
BCRD	\$
Transit in the Parks Program funding	\$100,000
<i>Total Revenue</i>	<i>\$?</i>
Expenses	
2 buses each with a capacity of 20-25 people	\$100,000
Operating Costs	\$40,000 (13 weeks x 7 days x 8 hours per day x \$50-55 per hour)
<i>Total Expenses</i>	<i>\$140,000</i>
Net Surplus (Deficit)	?

Figure 19: Estimated budget for Winter Pilot Shuttle
(source: Mountain Rides)

- 2.2) Pilot an extension of Mountain Rides’ Around Town Bus to the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters with bike trailers during summer weekends (mid-June to Labor Day).** Trailers could be sponsored by local bike rental companies. Extension would improve trail use for both hiking and biking and enhance visitor contact with the Sawtooth NRA. Idea would need to be vetted with Mountain Rides’ insurance.

Funding: Local bike rental companies, other local companies (advertising)
Responsible Parties: Mountain Rides, Sawtooth NRA, Sawtooth Forest

- 2.3) Pursue funding for evaluation and signage and safety improvements for nonmotorized crossings of SH-75 (Sawtooth NRA Headquarters, Galena Lodge, Sunny Gulch) and vehicle access (SH-75 parking pull-outs).**

Funding: Forest Highway Program (Federal Lands Highway Program), ITD
Responsible Parties: Sawtooth Forest, Sawtooth NRA, ITD
Contacts: George Fekaris, Western Federal Lands Highway Division, Federal Highway Administration, George.Fekaris@fhwa.dot.gov, 360-619-7766

- 2.4) Work with organizations that currently conduct visitor/transit rider surveys, such as Mountain Rides and BCRD, to better understand users’ transportation preferences.** Information that would be useful includes how people currently access the Sawtooth NRA and other areas not served by transit (if at all) and what their destinations are, what types of problems people

experience when accessing the Sawtooth NRA (parking, safety, etc.), whether people are willing to use transit to access recreational facilities, and what concerns (if any) people have about using transit to access recreational facilities. Don English (and staff) is also very willing to act as a resource for the Forest and their partners in developing questions to include in existing or new surveys conducted locally.

Funding: U.S. Forest Service, Mountain Rides, BCRD
Responsible Parties: Mountain Rides, BCRD

- 2.5) Consider accommodation of pet dogs on Mountain Ride services.** While acknowledging that such accommodation may not be feasible based on the policy of the state insurance carrier and concerns about disruption and interference with service and passengers, it appears that it would be a worthwhile consideration based on the number of people in the area who travel everywhere with their pet dogs. There are several transit systems in the U.S. and worldwide that allow pet dogs. Among those that do, most allow small pets in carriers that can be held in a passenger's lap, but some do allow large dogs. Often large dogs are only allowed during off-peak times, leashed, and with a maximum of one or two per train car (restrictions similar to those placed on bikes). Some require fares, others do not; some require muzzles, others do not. Systems that allow large dogs include Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, and Toronto.

Responsible Parties: Mountain Rides

Action Items:

- Contact state insurance carrier about its policy
- Contact system that currently allows dogs to find out about its policy, insurance, and how it resolves any issues that arise

References:

http://www.mbtta.com/riding_the_t/pets/

<http://www.dogfriendly.com/server/newsletters/features/transportation.shtml>.

3) City of Stanley/Redfish Lake

- 3.1) Develop a master plan for the Redfish Lake Recreation Complex and perform further recreation management planning and capacity analysis.** (Precondition for all other recommendations below). Considerations should include: location of and capacity for day-use parking, nonmotorized transportation within the complex between campgrounds and amenities, and emergency and evacuation access in and out of the complex.

Funding: Sawtooth NRA

Responsible Parties: Sawtooth NRA

- 3.2) Work to better understand visitor and business transportation activities and preferences.** The Stanley Chamber of Commerce survey of businesses and residents this fall may include several transportation-related questions regarding visitor access between Redfish Lake, Stanley, and Ketchum-Sun Valley. Information that would be useful includes how people currently access Redfish Lake and other areas in the Sawtooth NRA not served by transit or nonmotorized paths (if at all) and what their destinations are, what types of problems people experience when accessing the Sawtooth NRA (parking, safety, etc.), whether people are willing to use transit or nonmotorized vehicles to access recreational facilities, and what concerns (if any) people have about using transit or nonmotorized vehicles to access recreational facilities. Don English (and staff) is also very willing to act as a resource for the Forest and their partners in developing questions to include in existing or new surveys conducted locally.

Funding: private or USDA Forest Service

Responsible Parties: Stanley Chamber of Commerce, Redfish Lake Lodge, Sawtooth NRA

Contacts: Don English, Visitor Use Monitoring Program Manager, USDA Forest Service, (202-205-9595, denglish@fs.fed.us)

- 3.3) Strengthen the proposal for a nonmotorized transportation route (the Orion trail) between the City of Stanley and Redfish Lake as a way to improve safety and access and improve economic development, by:**

- **Determining the capacity of the area to understand how increasing access for people but not vehicles will work.**
- **Determining whether the proposed route would be considered more a “recreational trail” or a “transportation route.”**
- **The City of Stanley should incorporate the route into their economic development vision.**
- **The Sawtooth NRA should incorporate the route into the revised Corridor Management Plan for the Sawtooth Scenic Byway.**

Funding: Forest Highway Program (Federal Lands Highway Program), Transit in the Parks Program (FTA)

Responsible parties: Sawtooth NRA and the City of Stanley. State, tribal, or local governments with jurisdiction over land in the vicinity of the public land, acting with the consent of that federal land management agency, alone or in partnership with other governmental or non-governmental participants, may submit applications directly to the Transit in the Parks Program as long as the application is accompanied by a letter from the affected public land unit.

Contacts:

- George Fekaris, Western Federal Lands Highway Division, Federal Highway Administration, George.Fekaris@fhwa.dot.gov, 360-619-7766
- Bill Ramos, Region 10, Federal Transit Administration, bill.ramos@dot.gov, 425-208-5882

- 3.4) Consider accommodation of transit vehicles, nonmotorized transportation, and tour bus management in any parking and road design changes made in the future.**

Funding: Sawtooth NRA, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
Responsible parties: Sawtooth NRA

- 3.5) Consider encouraging a private organization to implement a stagecoach ride or other transit service from Stanley to Redfish Lake to provide transportation, interpretative service, and entertainment.**

Funding: private

TAG Participants

Transportation Assistance Group (TAG)

- George Fekaris, Western Federal Lands Highway Division, Federal Highway Administration
- Matthew Lesh, Federal Transit Administration
- Lindsey Morse, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
- Eric Plosky, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
- Bill Ramos, Region 10, Federal Transit Administration
- Floyd Thompson, National Program for Sustainable Tourism & Scenic Byways, U.S. Forest Service
- Kay Shurtz, Region 4, USDA Forest Service (*review*)

U.S. Forest Service: Sawtooth National Forest

- Kevin Duchow
- Sarah Lau

U.S. Forest Service: Sawtooth National Recreation Area

- Sara Baldwin
- David Fluetsch
- Eric McQuay (*review*)

U.S. Forest Service: Ketchum Ranger District

- Kurt Nelson

Other Participants

- Wood River Valley/Ketchum/Sun Valley
 - Jason Miller, Director, Mountain Rides
 - Gene Daniels, Mountain Rides
 - Jim Keating, Executive Director, Blaine County Recreation District
 - Eric Rector, Blaine County Recreation District
- City of Stanley/Redfish Lake
 - Hannah Stauts, Mayor, City of Stanley
 - Jeff Clegg, General Manager, Redfish Lake Lodge
 - Jared Hopkinson, President, Chamber of Commerce
 - David Genter, Executive Director, The Sawtooth Society
- Don Shepler and Erin Zell, Galena Lodge Concessionaires (*contacts for questions*)
- Devin Rigby, District 4 Engineer, Idaho Transportation Department (*review*)
- Don English, NVUMS, USFS (*contact for questions*)

Supporting Documents

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NOTICE

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