

GRAND COUNTY COMMISSION SUBMISSION

Access and Capacity Enhancement (ACE) Alternative

A Generational Blueprint for Access at Arches National Park



GRAND COUNTY
— U T A H —

As vital partners, Utah, Grand County and Arches National Park must work together to ensure access evolves to meet the needs of future Generations.

Utah & Grand County rely heavily on access to Arches



Community Identity

- » Iconic symbol of Utah's beauty
- » Embodies our core values
- » Resilience, adaptability
- » Enduring connection to landscape



Economic Health

- » \$1.8B regional visitor spend
- » 70% local jobs tied to park visitation
- » 70–85% revenue from tourism



Active Lifestyle & Outdoor Culture

- » Access to outdoor amenities
- » Emphasis on Health and Wellness
- » Community and social connection

“Gateway communities are vital partners in the mission of the National Park Service to preserve resources and provide for the enjoyment of the public”

-National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998

The Timed-Entry alternative emerged from the park's outdated 1989 General Management Plan that prioritizes vehicle access, and Desired Conditions based on a 1993 survey.

The 1998 General Management Plan established 'vehicle dependent' access misaligned with current public demand for connectivity and multi-modal transportation options, including active transportation.



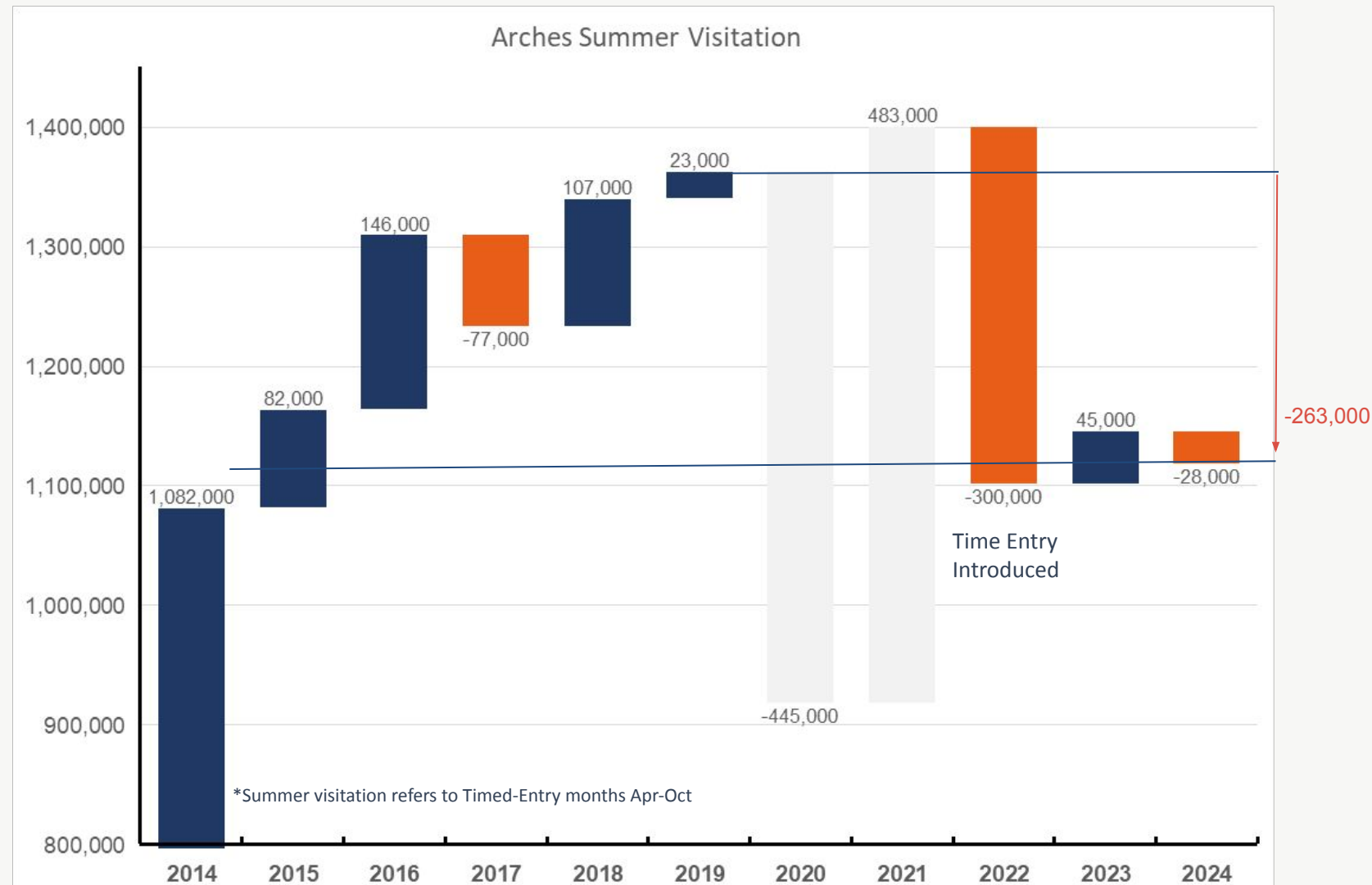
“Visitors would continue to encounter congestion in certain popular areas due to insufficient parking, which in turn would result in frustration”

-1989 General Management Plan

To maintain the 1989 desired conditions the Timed-Entry alternative proposed maintaining summer visitation at key park attractions at 2022 levels indefinitely, which is similar to 2014 visitation.

“When considering use levels, limiting attributes, and observed conditions, park staff identified visitor use levels in 2019 to be unsustainable and will not allow the park to meet Desired Conditions. Based on observations, visitation levels during the summer of 2022 were manageable and should be maintained in order to meet Desired Conditions.”

-2024 Draft Visitor Access and Experience Plan and Environmental Assessment



When Timed-Entry was introduced, the NPS stated it was “designed to accommodate the same level of use as a typical busy day in 2019.” However, now the NPS considers “visitor use levels in 2019 to be unsustainable.” These management goals have shifted over time and are contradictory.

2022

“The Timed-Entry pilot was not designed to limit use. The amount of use accommodated during the pilot is the same as a typical busy day in 2019.”

“If every day in the pilot were to resemble a typical busy day, the amount of visitor use would see an increase by about 12.5% during the pilot compared to 2019.”

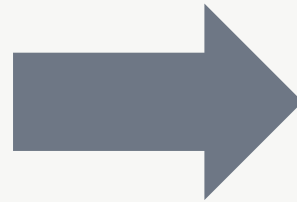
“Because the pilot was designed as a typical busy day in 2019 we expect economic benefits to be unchanged.”

-Michael Reynolds April 2022 NPS Regional Director

2024

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Modern visitors prefer improved access, capacity enhancement, and infrastructure expansion, not access restrictions

The **2021 Visitor Spending and Experience Survey** – which was conducted during the period of highest visitation at Arches on record – provides compelling evidence that today’s visitors perceive higher visitation, capacity, and enhanced infrastructure to be compatible with a quality visitor experience and resource protection.

Crowding

Number of people on trails are acceptable to protect visitor experience ie. prevent crowding

Mobility

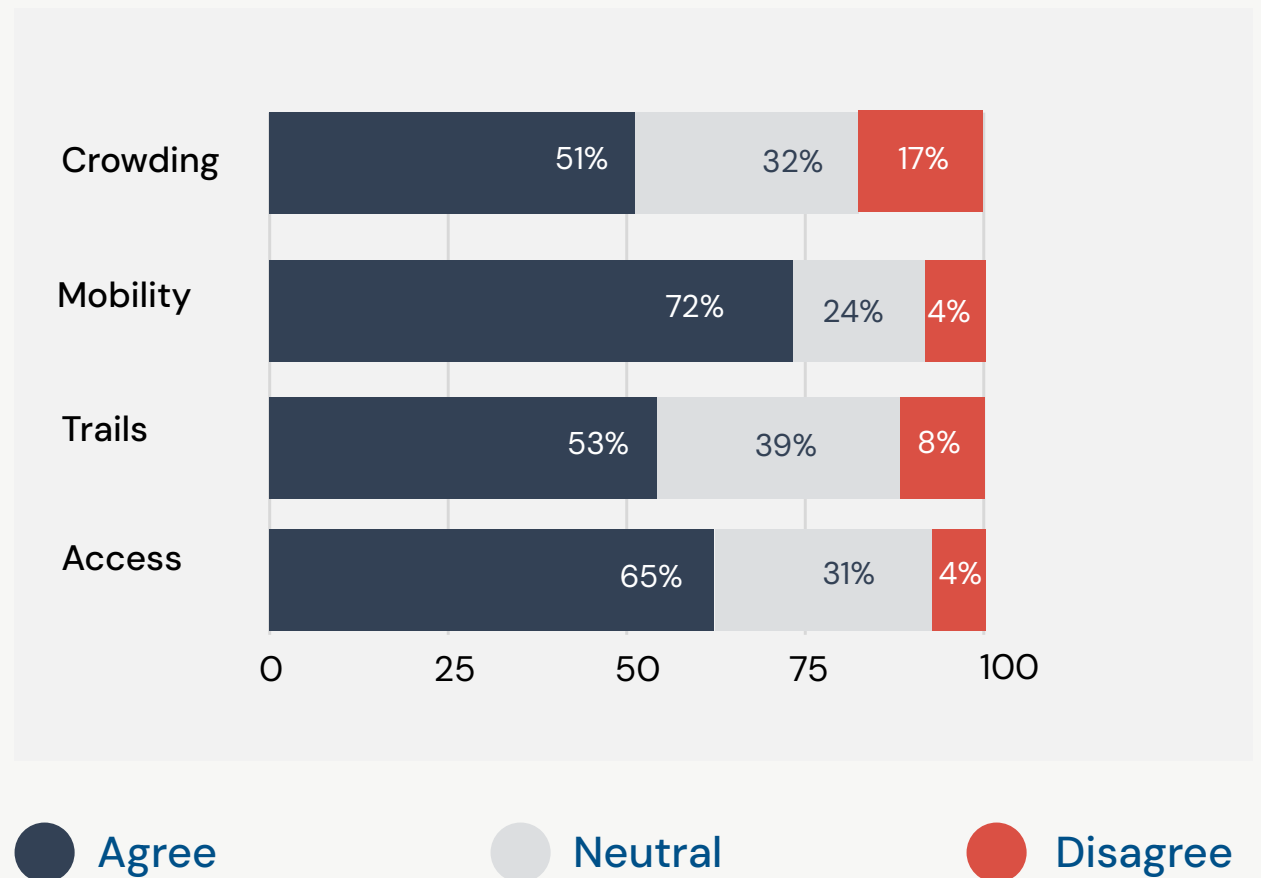
Support voluntary shuttle

Trails

Support expanding trail network

Access

Support expanding parking allowing more visitors at key sites



The ACE Alternative is a flexible, adaptive, scalable evidence based strategy that will grow to meet the needs and expectations of current and future generations while protecting park resources.

The ace does not offer a silver bullet to singularly address arches access challenges. It recognizes a multi-pronged approach that is scalable unlike the Timed-Entry.

Modernize Management

- Amend "Desired Conditions"
- Implement adaptive zoning

Infrastructure Improvements

- Voluntary shuttle
- Optimize parking & traffic flow
- Create new trail networks

Technology

- Real-time data communication
- Use the "Mighty Five" platform to dynamically manage demand
- Automate entrance gate

The ACE is adaptive to accommodate for diverse visitor preferences

High Density / Lower Solitude

Focus: Key Attractions (Delicate Arch, Windows, Devils Garden, Balance Rock, Park Ave, and Sand Dune Arch).

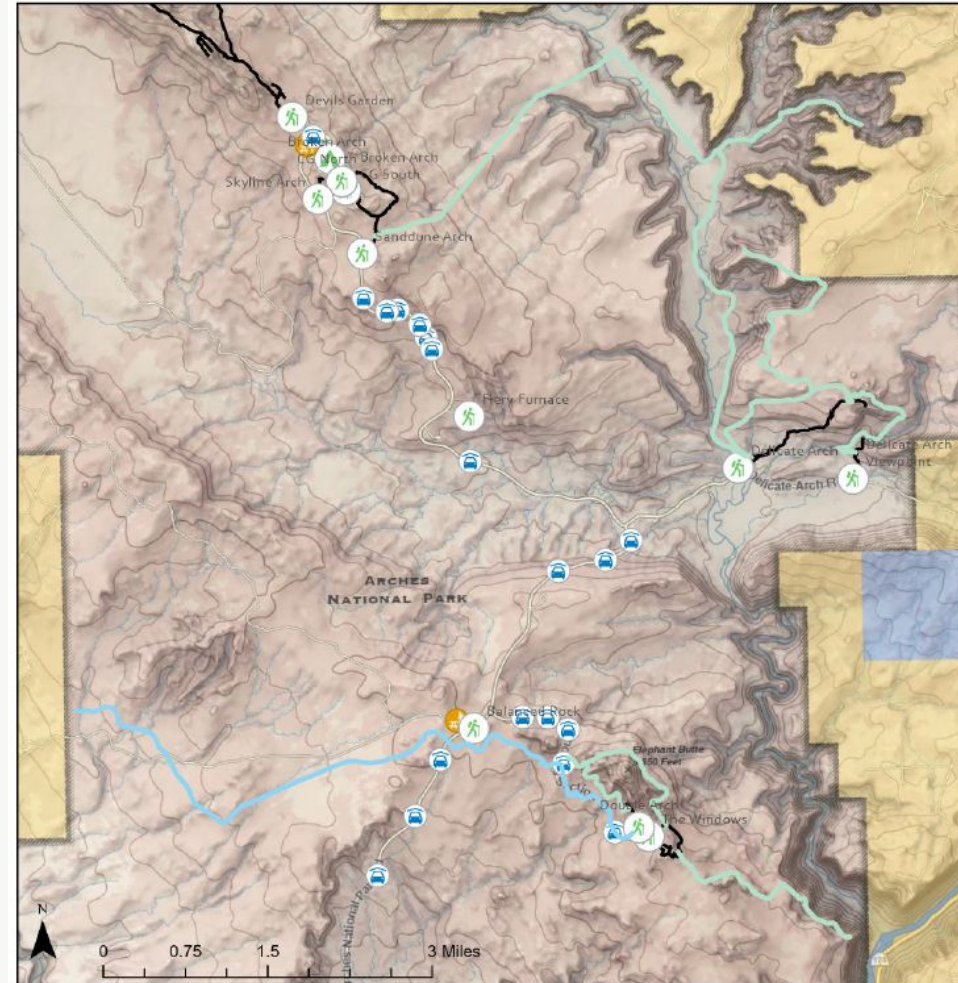
Strategy: High-capacity infrastructure improvements, trail connectivity, and efficient shuttle access for "crowd-tolerant" visitors.

Low Density / High Solitude

Focus: Wilderness quality (Lost Spring, Fiery Furnace Delicate Arch loop, Colorado River overlook, Courthouse Wash).

Strategy: Expand recreational opportunities. Create primitive trails and improve trail connectivity for longer hikes for visitors seeking solitude.

DRAFT: Proposed Trails



Legend

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Bike - Proposed | Pullout | Campground | Bureau of Land Management |
| Hike - Proposed | Arches Picnic Area | Arches Restrooms | State Trust Lands |
| Arches Trailheads | Trail | State Sovereign Land | Arches Boundary |

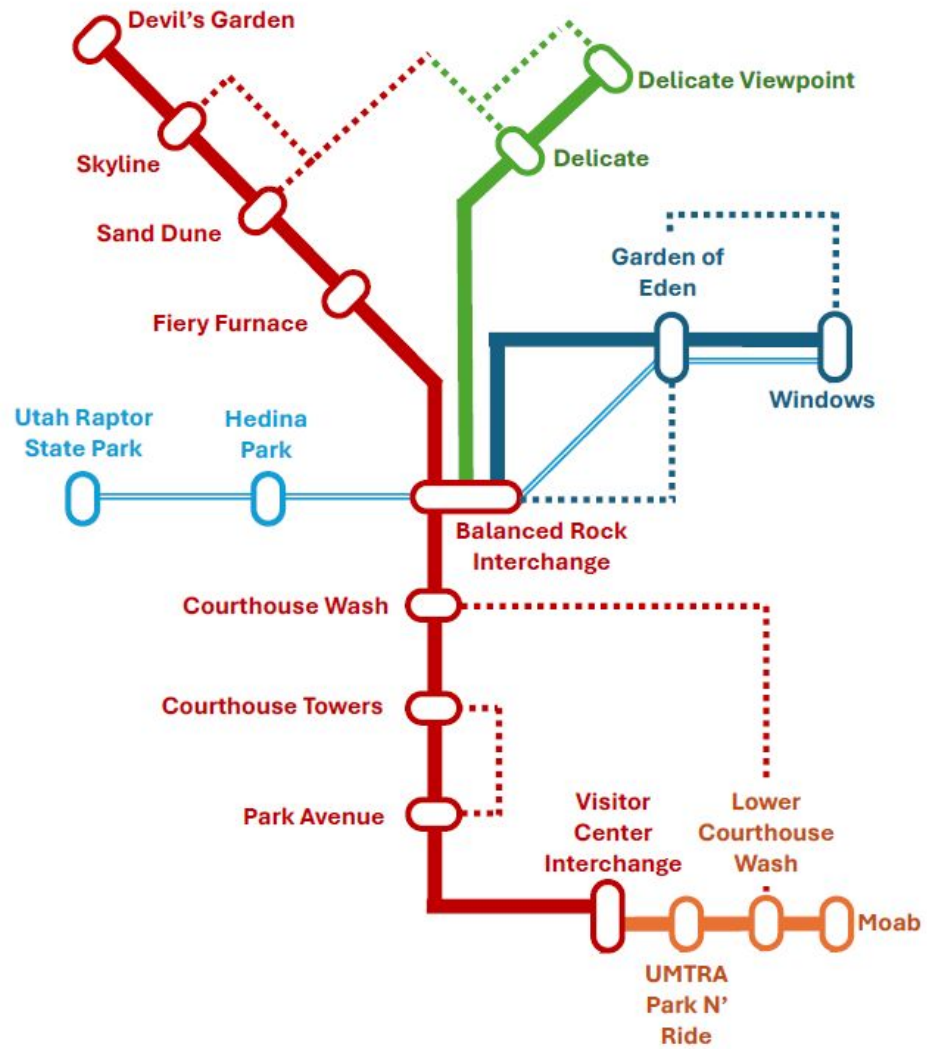
The ACE Alternative is a long-term access and capacity enhancement path for the current and future generations.

Adaptive management: Shifts from restricting access (reservations) to actively managing visitation and improving infrastructure.

Fulfills the Dual Mandate: Modernizes the GMP to meet the Organic Act by planning for a more active park less dependent on personal vehicles.

Supports Sustainable Economic Growth: Increasing capacity can benefit Grand County economy without compromising resource integrity.

The Grand County Commission and the State of Utah request the National Park Service to include the Access and Capacity Enhancement (ACE) alternative for detailed analysis in the upcoming planning cycle.



| Voluntary Shuttle System | Active Transportation Network | Grand County Transit |
|--|---|---|
| █ Main Line | █ Bike Paths | █ Moab Area Transit |
| █ Delicate Line | ⋯ Hiking Trails | |
| █ Windows Line | | |

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THANK YOU