

## Updates from the Public Lands Team



### Wichita Mountains begins comprehensive alternative transportation plan

The Volpe Center is currently helping the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge develop a comprehensive alternative transportation plan. Wichita Mountains is one of the busiest units managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Approximately 1.5 million visitors a year come to enjoy views of bison, elk, and Texas Longhorn cattle, and other species. The refuge encompasses nearly 60,000 acres of mixed-grass prairie and protects the endangered black-capped vireo and one of the oldest mountain ranges on Earth. Refuge staff continue to look for ways to accommodate burgeoning visitation, while protecting the area's invaluable natural resources, and limiting facility expansion to the current "disturbed" footprint.

One transportation challenge is that almost all visitors arrive by private automobile, creating roadway and parking congestion, and safety hazards. For this reason, the Fish and Wildlife Service requested a Transportation Assistance Group site visit in the spring of 2009, in which the Volpe Center participated. The Volpe Center subsequently produced a [transportation study](#) in 2010 that recommended a traffic analysis to inform subsequent transportation planning, potential on- and off-road non-motorized facilities, a bicycle sharing pilot, new wayfinding signage, an intelligent transportation system focused around the refuge's busy parking areas, and an

### Welcome to our newsletter!

The Public Lands Team shares *Updates* twice a year to highlight recent activities and news.

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evaluation of transit possibilities.

Building off the alternative transportation report, the refuge was awarded funds through the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks program and commissioned the Volpe Center to conduct a preliminary transit assessment and to develop a comprehensive alternative transportation plan, to include a traffic study, a non-motorized network analysis, and a bicycle and pedestrian resource guide. Following on the recommendations of Volpe's 2010 report, the refuge received implementation funds for construction of a non-motorized trail and development of an intelligent transportation system to manage its seven busiest parking lots.

Project contact: [Luis Mejias](#)

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## Volpe supports Federal Lands Access Program

The Volpe Center continues to support federal land management agencies in framing priorities and needs in connection with reauthorization of the major federal surface transportation law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), which was enacted last summer. Volpe is helping to develop fact sheets highlighting project successes under previous legislation and is conducting analyses of future agency priorities including safety, asset management, performance measurement, and multimodal transportation initiatives.

The Volpe Center is also working with federal land management agencies as they implement the Federal Lands Access Program, a new initiative authorized in MAP-21 to improve state- or local-owned transportation facilities that provide access to or are adjacent to federal lands. Volpe leads webinars to help promote this new program to agency field staff, and assists in reviewing program materials to ensure compliance with requirements. Much of this support builds on past transportation system analyses, assessments, and inventories developed by Volpe on behalf of sponsor agencies to identify critical access needs.

Project contact: [Michael Kay](#)

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## About the Public Lands Team

Primarily organized within Volpe's [Center for Transportation Policy and Planning](#), our team helps federal land management agencies resolve complex transportation challenges at both the program and project levels.

Our work draws on expertise in a variety of fields, including policy and program development, multimodal systems planning, alternative fuels and vehicle selection, environmental compliance, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

You can read more about our team [here](#).

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## About the Volpe Center

The Volpe Center, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, develops transportation innovations for the public good. Part of the U.S. DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Volpe partners with public and private organizations to assess the needs of the transportation community, evaluate research and development, assist in the deployment of transportation technologies, and inform decision- and policy-making.

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## Contact the Public Lands Team

For questions, general information, or to speak with us about getting started on a new project, please contact Eric Plosky at (617) 494 - 2785 or [volpepubliclands@dot.gov](mailto:volpepubliclands@dot.gov).

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## Volpe provides on-site technical assistance to the Forest Service



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Research and  
Innovative Technology  
Administration**

This past autumn, Lindsey Morse of the Transportation Planning division had the opportunity to provide on-site technical assistance to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Washington Office – Engineering staff. This support was modeled on a similar assignment carried out by colleague Haley Peckett, who worked on-site with the Fish and Wildlife Service during the spring of 2012. Lindsey provided assistance to USFS under an existing interagency agreement, and committed the majority of her time to assisting the Forest Service in meeting the requirements of MAP-21.

The timing allowed for Lindsey to support USFS in its initial participation in the new Federal Lands Transportation Program. Under this new program, \$30 million will be competitively distributed each year between the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. MAP-21 requires each partner agency to define a transportation network that supports “high-use Federal recreation sites and Federal economic generators.” During her time at USFS, Lindsey worked with staff to document agency needs and priorities, understand data availability, interpret legislative terms, and develop criteria for creating the transportation inventory required by MAP-21.

The USFS staff were terrific hosts – inclusive and welcoming. Since returning to Cambridge, Lindsey continues to work closely with USFS, including participating in the USFS Annual Roads meeting in San Dimas, California, to finalize the road selection process for the transportation inventory, developing outreach materials for the Federal Lands Access Program, and providing support in preparing for reauthorization.

Contact: [Lindsey Morse](#)

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## Cuyahoga Valley completes rail study



Faced with an aging fleet of rail coaches, a projected increase in ridership, and limited funding options, Cuyahoga Valley National Park asked the Volpe Center to develop a 20-year [Comprehensive Rail Study](#) for the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. As one of the only national parks with a scenic railroad, the Cuyahoga Valley has worked in partnership with the scenic railroad since 1989 under a cooperative agreement. In 2012, the railroad had record ridership—over 200,000 passenger boardings. To meet growing visitor needs, the railroad has successfully developed and expanded rail infrastructure, services, programs, and ridership in partnership with the National Park Service.

The rail study, which will be completed this spring, provides recommendations on dozens of prioritized, time-sequenced management actions over the next 20 years. These improvements will enhance the passenger experience, allowing visitors to explore the park without the use of a personal automobile; reduce operations, maintenance, and administrative costs; and position the park and scenic railroad to take advantage of competitive funding opportunities.

Project contact: [Ben Rasmussen](#)

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## **Volpe continues climate change adaptation and mitigation planning support**

The Volpe Center continues to support the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and federal land management agencies in integrating climate change into transportation planning at the national, regional, and unit levels. This support follows on from the [Interagency Transportation, Land Use, and Climate Change Pilot Project](#), which combined scenario planning with climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. During that project, the Volpe Center connected with the New England Federal Partners, which provides a forum for coastal and marine spatial planning and climate change mitigation and adaptation for the New England region. Group membership includes FHWA, the Federal Transit Administration, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

The Volpe Center has continued its relationship with the New England Federal Partners; during January 16-17, Volpe hosted several meetings of the group, participating on behalf of FHWA. The Volpe Center is currently working with FHWA on a second climate change and scenario planning project, to be focused on an inland location, and is engaging many of the partners who were involved in the Cape Cod pilot, as well as additional federal agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Land Management. A study area should be identified this spring, and the study should be completed by the end of 2014.

Project contacts: [Ben Rasmussen](#) and [Lindsey Morse](#)

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## **NPS develops its first National Long Range Transportation Plan**

The Volpe Center and the National Park Service (NPS) Denver Service Center are supporting the NPS Facility Planning Branch in developing the first [NPS National Long Range Transportation Plan](#). The planning process is modeled after the statutory metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes, in the 3C fashion (comprehensive, collaborative, continuing). The long-range planning effort is examining the NPS transportation vision, goals and objectives, baseline conditions, trends, needs, strategies, financial plans, and performance management. Key focus areas of the plan include asset management, financial planning, visitor experience, resource protection, safety, and partnerships. The Volpe Center and the Denver Service Center have been working with subject matter experts throughout NPS to identify how transportation broadly supports, and in some cases challenges, the agency's mission.

Expected completion of the plan is late 2013.

Project contact: [Alex Linthicum](#)

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## **Red Rock continues feasibility study/environmental assessment**

The Volpe Center conducted a 2012 [Transportation Feasibility Study](#) at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, a popular Bureau of Land Management (BLM) natural area located in Las Vegas, Nevada. The study identified problems with congestion and parking along the 13-mile, one-way Scenic Drive that loops through the site, and within adjacent parking lots. The congestion results in environmental impacts and safety issues when vehicles are parked in undesignated areas near the parking lots and along the Drive.

The study recommended seasonal shuttle service on Scenic Drive, additional parking at select lots, and a partial return lane on the first three miles of Scenic Drive. Subsequently, the Volpe Center initiated preparation of an environmental assessment to identify potential affected environmental and socioeconomic resources in the study area. In consultation with BLM specialists, Volpe Center is currently evaluating impacts to those resources, and will continue to work with the BLM to complete the evaluation and publish a draft environmental assessment for public review.

Project contact: [Marla Engel](#)

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## **Public lands agencies adopt the Eco-Logical approach**

Working as a facilitator between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and public lands agencies, the Volpe Center is meeting with leadership at the Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Fish and Wildlife Service to find new opportunities for engaging with public lands staff on the Eco-Logical approach and connecting Eco-Logical principles with transportation planning on public lands. The Eco-Logical approach brings together agencies and the public to integrate their plans and arrive at a joint set of environmental priorities for transportation planning, project development, and delivery.

Using these priorities, the agencies can avoid impacts and explore mitigation in areas of unavoidable impacts. Several federal land management agencies are active partners with FHWA on the Eco-Logical approach, participating regularly in interagency coordination

meetings, contributing to issues of [Eco-Logical Successes](#), and offering feedback on upcoming training and funding opportunities. Federal land management agencies have made presentations at the Eco-Logical Webinar Series, led by the FHWA Office of Project Development and Environmental Review and the Volpe Center. The Forest Service also featured a recent [webinar](#) on examples of the Eco-Logical approach on roadways in national forests.

Project Contact: [Haley Peckett](#)

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## Mount Baker-Snoqualmie continues alternative transportation feasibility study



The Volpe Center continues to support Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in addressing transportation challenges in this highly popular, dispersed recreation area. The effort includes a phase I scoping report and a phase II transit feasibility and visitor information assessment. As part of the [phase I report](#), completed in May 2012, Volpe helped Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest identify goals, collect and assess data, and conduct stakeholder meetings to develop prioritized transportation strategies along four main highway corridors through the forest. The effort identified limited and fragmented traveler information and access barriers for certain populations as two focus areas for further investigation. In the [phase II report](#), expected to be completed in late 2013, the Volpe Center will refine transit alternatives along the I-90 corridor out of Seattle and develop regional visitor information strategies.

Project contact: [Lindsey Morse](#)

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## **Volpe leads FWS Regional Alternative Transportation Evaluation in Southeast region**

Following a successful model established in other Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) regions, the Volpe Center is leading a Regional Alternative Transportation Evaluation (RATE) for Region 4 in the Southeast. Volpe staff participated in a meeting of the long-range transportation plan core team, in which the group discussed regional trends relevant to alternative transportation and prepared a comprehensive RATE and transportation questionnaire. The online questionnaire generated 115 responses and revealed several key needs for Region 4. These include new water-based infrastructure, improved wayfinding and orientation to FWS stations, and stronger outreach and promotion about the benefits of alternative transportation to FWS station managers. The RATE team is conducting phone interviews with five refuges to learn more about specific opportunities for alternative transportation in the region.

Project Contact: [Haley Peckett](#)