

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Travel Analysis Reports Released

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## **FAQ 1: What does this Travel Analysis announcement mean?**

The Forest Service is making a region-wide announcement about the release of 17 travel analysis reports identifying opportunities to achieve a more sustainable system of roads for each national forest in the Pacific Northwest. These reports are not decision documents. They are guides that will inform future decisions on where and how to invest resources on building new roads, managing current roads, or decommissioning old roads. The public will have the opportunity to participate and provide feedback for local proposed actions that result in future decisions involving forest roads.

## **FAQ 2: What is Travel Management?**

In 2005, the Forest Service created a Travel Management Rule to provide national consistency and clarity on motor vehicle uses on all National Forests within the National Forest System. The rule is subdivided into 3 parts: Subpart A - Administration of the Forest Transportation System; Subpart B - Designation of Roads, Trails and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; and Subpart C - Use by Over-Snow Vehicles. The general purpose of Subpart A is to help forests identify their future road systems needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands. The general purpose of Subparts B and C is to reduce impacts from cross-country/off route travel on national forests by designating roads, trails, and areas where motorized use is allowed.

## **FAQ 3: What is Travel Analysis?**

Travel Analysis is the Forest Service's science-based process developed in response to the 2005 Travel Management Rule to provide a more sustainable system of roads, trails and areas for public motor vehicle use on national forest lands. Travel Analysis is an important first step in meeting those sections of Subpart A of the 2005 Travel Management Rule that require each National Forest to:

- a. Identify the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of national forest lands;
- b. Identify the roads on lands under Forest Service jurisdiction that are no longer needed to meet forest recreation and resource management objectives and reflect long-term funding expectations;
- c. Under separate actions, decommission or consider for other uses those roads identified as unneeded.



Travel analysis takes a comprehensive look at the roads of the entire forest, and the issues, risks, and benefits for all users, and the associated forest resources. Interdisciplinary teams have reviewed all available data, along with information we received from you, about our roads, access needs, and the affected forest resources with the goal of determining where changes to current road management practices would be beneficial.

**FAQ 4: Why are you going through this Travel Analysis process?**

We have a limited amount of funding to keep our roads maintained for safe access, and for the protection of forest resources, such as water quality and wildlife. It is critical to work together toward an affordable and environmentally sustainable road system, that meets Forest Service management goals and responsibilities, and access needs, with a full understanding of associated trade-offs.

**FAQ 5: Is this just about funding?**

This is more than money. Funding is an important consideration in travel management work, but even if others agreed to pay for the shortfall, roads that threaten natural resources would still need to be repaired, upgraded, or sometimes even closed to mitigate the resource risk.

The ability to maintain the roads of the National Forest Transportation System is linked directly to available funding. Funding for road maintenance in the national forests of the Northwest has steadily decreased. All indications are pointing toward continued reductions in funding. Meanwhile, the demand for road use is increasing, the roads and bridges are aging, wildlife impacts are occurring, and sediment from roads is contributing to water quality and fish habitat degradation. The agency can no longer provide the same level of roaded access to users with a decreasing budget.

**FAQ 6: Will Travel Analysis close more roads?**

No. Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. It identifies and analyzes issues, risks, benefits, and opportunities for possible future changes to the road system. The current road system cannot be maintained or sustained, so it is likely the future road system will include fewer open roads. In some cases, closing roads to motor vehicle use, but maintaining use as a trail may be an opportunity identified in Travel Analysis. However, funding for trail maintenance is continuing to decline too, so an opportunity to convert a road to a trail must consider sustainability of the trail system as well.



### **FAQ 7: Will Travel Analysis add more roads?**

No. Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. Instead, it identifies and analyzes issues, risks, benefits, and opportunities for possible future changes to the road system. The analysis considers the presence of unauthorized routes or temporary roads in context with a potential opportunity to add an unauthorized road to the National Forest System road system to provide access if warranted.

### **FAQ 8: What kind of public outreach did you conduct?**

We conducted extensive outreach during the travel analysis process and other ongoing forest management efforts. We heard the requests for more access. We heard the requests for fewer roads. We heard the complaints about roads in poor condition. We know the requirements to minimize environmental and cultural impacts. We stretch our funding for road maintenance and environmental protections as far as we can. Unfortunately, all these things don't merge. There are gaps.

Public participation added the people perspective to the science-based element of Travel Analysis. We asked the public to engage with us to review the road system with us, and help us recommend opportunities that lead to a safe, affordable and environmentally sustainable road system; to help make the gaps smaller. Public participation made this effort stronger.

### **FAQ 9: How will I be able to prospect or explore for locatable minerals?**

Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. Instead, these reports will be used to inform future decisions. Since the current road system cannot be sustained at current funding levels, there will likely be changes in the future, but the public will have the opportunity to participate and provide feedback for any proposed actions through the NEPA process.

Prospecting or exploring for locatable minerals can continue on roads designated for public motor vehicle use. Individuals with mineral rights may also have access provided by roads that are closed to the general public, and are handled on an individual basis. Aside from areas specifically withdrawn from mineral entry, such as designated Wilderness Areas, the travel analysis process considered data and information received on potential areas where access would be needed. Miners' rights to conduct locatable mineral operations on NFS lands under the United State mining laws are not absolute; miners must comply with reasonable regulations promulgated by the Forest Service to protect NFS lands. Please review your forests travel analysis report for any recommendations or updated information on roads of interest.



**FAQ 10: How will I get to my property? mining claim? special-use permit area? recreation residence?**

Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. Instead, these reports will be used to inform future decisions. Since the current road system cannot be sustained at current funding levels, there will likely be changes in the future, but the public will have the opportunity to participate and provide feedback for any proposed actions through the NEPA process.

Travel Analysis does not affect access to private property, mining claims, permitted use areas or recreation residences. In fact, those uses affected Travel Analysis by disclosing the need for roaded access of some type. Each use, such as those mentioned above, have different stipulations and conditions imposed under the authorizing document (permit, easement, etc.). For example, use of access roads and responsibility for maintaining access vary from one authorization to another. Or the authorizing document may be silent on the subject, suggesting a review or modification.

**FAQ 11: How will I be able to get firewood or go hunting/camping if you close more roads?**

Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. Instead, these reports will be used to inform future decisions. Since the current road system cannot be sustained at current funding levels, there will likely be changes in the future, but the public will have the opportunity to participate and provide feedback for any proposed actions through the NEPA process.

The travel analysis process considered data and information received about access for fuel wood gathering, hunting, camping, etc. The analysis identifies opportunities that lead to a more affordable and environmentally sustainable road system with a full understanding of associated tradeoffs. Please review your forests travel analysis report for any recommendations or updated information on roads of interest.

**FAQ 12: What if you decide my favorite roads are no longer needed?**

Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. Instead, these reports will be used to inform future decisions. Since the current road system cannot be sustained at current funding levels, there will likely be changes in the future, but the public will have the opportunity to participate and provide feedback for any proposed actions through the NEPA process.



### **FAQ 13: How will you fight fires if you close all your roads?**

Our ability to effectively manage wildfires is a top priority. One of the risk categories analyzed under Travel Analysis is the ability to respond to emergencies with the current road system, including access for firefighting efforts. The analysis looked at historical fire data, locations, frequency, severity, etc. to display areas most at risk, and possibly requiring continued road access.

### **FAQ 14: How will you make sure that roads don't pollute our water under the Clean Water Act?**

The Forest Service is required by law to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act. Road location on unstable terrain or within proximity to stream channels has the potential to effect water quality and watershed conditions. Travel analysis helped the forests identify places where threats to water quality have the potential to occur. Those road systems or portions of the road system of concern were identified for either closure, upgrade, or decommissioning depending on the tradeoffs with access needs.

### **FAQ 15: How will you assure there are roads for access by persons with disabilities?**

Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. Instead, these reports will be used to inform future decisions. Since the current road system cannot be sustained at current funding levels, there will likely be changes in the future, but the public will have the opportunity to participate and provide feedback for any proposed actions through the NEPA process.

In the future, any restrictions on motor vehicle use that are applied consistently to everyone, including persons with disabilities, are not discriminatory. Generally, granting an exemption from restricted motor vehicle access for people with disabilities would not be consistent with resource protection; neither are exemptions aligned with accessibility regulations or the travel management rule. Under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, no person with a disability can be denied participation in a Federal program that is available to all other people solely because of his or her disability. Consistent with 36 CFR 212.1, FSM 2353.05, and Title V, Section 507(c), of the Americans With Disabilities Act, wheelchairs and mobility devices, including those that are battery-powered, that are designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion and that are suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area are allowed on all NFS lands that are open to foot travel.



**FAQ 16: What do you consider your current road system? It should be every road that's out there.**

The current road system that was analyzed during the travel analysis process consists of all National Forest System Roads, which are existing and under Forest Service jurisdiction. This includes: roads that are open to the public for motor vehicle use; roads that are closed to the general public but are used for administrative purposes; and roads in storage (closed for more than a year, to be opened for specific projects, and then returned to storage).

Travel Analysis analyzed all National Forest System Roads as described above. The presence and use of other system roads (private, county, state, other federal agency, etc.) was considered in the analysis in context only, as they affect access needs, risks, and benefits, and in some cases, cost to maintain. Unauthorized routes and temporary roads, while acknowledged as present on the landscape, were considered as part of the analysis only in the cases where the unauthorized road would need to be added to the National Forest road system.

**FAQ 17: Will the roads in Roadless Areas be closed? RS 2477 will prevent you from closing any more roads.**

Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. Instead, these reports will be used to inform future decisions. Since the current road system cannot be sustained at current funding levels, there will likely be changes in the future, but the public will have the opportunity to participate and provide feedback for any proposed actions through the NEPA process.

Travel Analysis does not close roads. Roadless Areas have additional requirements for changes to system roads. All system roads, including those in Roadless Areas, was included in Travel Analysis.

**FAQ 18: What will you do about important roads that cause a lot of environmental damage?**

Travel Analysis used science-based data to broadly identify the type and location of environmental damage. In addition, the analysis identifies the “importance” or benefit of roads for access. The Travel Analysis reports show roads of great environmental concern, roads with high degree of benefits, and potential opportunities to keep, close, or decommission the road and mitigate impacts within funding limits. Detailed recommendations would be provided after site-specific environmental analysis performed under NEPA at a later date.



**FAQ 19: Where do I go, or who do I call, to get more information?**

Travel analysis reports for each forest are available at [www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/landmanagement/?cid=fseprd485439](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/landmanagement/?cid=fseprd485439)

Also, you can check with your local forest's travel analysis team.

**FAQ 20: How do I give you my comments? How do I provide feedback for future proposed actions involving roads?**

Any future decisions involving forests roads will require the NEPA planning process, where the public will have opportunities to participate and provide feedback. Check with your local forest for upcoming planning initiatives involving roads and the timeline for participating. Or check out: [www.fs.usda.gov/r6](http://www.fs.usda.gov/r6)



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