

Frequently Asked Questions

- FAQ 1: What is Travel Analysis? Didn't you just finish this when you designated roads for us to use?
- FAQ 2: Why are you going through this Travel Analysis process?
- FAQ 3: Why aren't you identifying the Minimum Road System? When do expect to identify your Minimum Road System?
- FAQ 4: Will Travel Analysis close more roads?
- FAQ 5: Will Travel Analysis add more roads?
- FAQ 6: You didn't listen before, so why should we tell you what we want now?
- FAQ 7: How will I be able to prospect or explore for locatable minerals?
- FAQ 8: How will I get to my property? mining claim? special use permit area? recreation residence?
- FAQ 9: How will I be able to get firewood or go hunting/camping if you close more roads?
- FAQ 10: What if you decide my favorite roads are no longer needed?
- FAQ 11: How will you fight fires if you close all your roads?
- FAQ 12: How will you make sure that roads don't pollute our water under the Clean Water Act?
- FAQ 13: How will you assure there are roads for access by persons with disabilities?
- FAQ 14: What do you consider your current road system? It should be every road that's out there.
- FAQ 15: Will the roads in Roadless Areas be closed? RS 2477 will prevent you from closing any more roads.
- FAQ 16: What will you do about important roads that cause a lot of environmental damage?
- FAQ 17: Where do I go, or who do I call, to get more information?
- FAQ 18: How do I give you my comments?



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1. What is Travel Analysis? Didn't you just finish this when you designated roads for us to use in Subpart B?

Designation of Roads, Trails, and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use in Subpart B identified which roads were available for motor vehicle use by the public, by vehicle type and if needed season of use. The focus was on areas from a typically "Open unless closed" system to a system of designated routes as a means of preventing resource impacts by motor vehicles traveling cross-country. The Deciding Official used a set of criteria in making Subpart B decisions. The examination of affordability of the road system in making those decisions was one of many considerations.

Travel analysis (Subpart A) takes a broad-brush look at the roads of the entire forest, and the issues, risks, and benefits for all users, and the associated forest resources. Together, we'll look at our available data, along with information that we receive from you, about our roads. Once we have this information available about the roads, access needs, and the affected forest resources, we can begin to see where there may be a need for the road system to change. 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 for all parties 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.

2. Why are you doing this now, after going through Subpart B?

The objective of the route designation effort (Subpart B) was to determine which forest roads, trails, and areas, by vehicle type and season of use were designated for motor vehicle travel. It was beyond the scope of that effort to look at the risks, benefits, and opportunities of *all* system roads.

Generally, Subpart B did not look at closing or decommissioning system roads. Travel Analysis will inform future decisions for management of the National Forest Transportation System, such as forest plan revisions, ecosystem restoration and management projects, and *future designations* of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. The priority and commitment now is to work toward fulfillment of the intent of Subpart A by conducting a Travel Analysis Process.

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 degradation. The agency can no longer provide the same level of roaded access to users with a decreasing budget.



3. Why aren't you identifying the Minimum Road System? When do expect to identify your Minimum Road System?

The Deputy Chief's Office of the Forest Service recently clarified the role of Travel Analysis in identification of the minimum road system. Travel Analysis does not result in a decision, and does not trigger NEPA. However, identification of the Minimum Road System is a decision, and therefore subject to analysis performed under NEPA.

The idea of doing forest-scale Travel Analysis under NEPA to determine the minimum road system would not do justice to the site specific needs of the individual drainages or access routes. Therefore, the Travel Analysis Report will be used toward the development of the future minimum road system, probably at a watershed level scale, or smaller.

The NEPA analyses will occur after Travel Analysis is completed, and when Forests address issues that include system roads in a particular watershed. Timing will also be dependent upon funding for analysis, and again when a decision is implemented.

4. Will Travel Analysis close more roads?

No. Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. It will, however, identify and analyze 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. 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, too.

5. Will Travel Analysis add more roads?

No. Travel Analysis does not result in a decision to make changes to the road system. It will, however, identify and analyze issues, risks, benefits, and opportunities for possible future changes to the road system. The analysis will consider the presence of unauthorized routes or temporary roads in context with a potential opportunity to provide access where a need is identified, but a system road does not exist. The current road system cannot be maintained or sustained; adding more roads to the road system, however, may still be identified as an opportunity in Travel Analysis.

6. You didn't listen before, so why should we tell you what we want now?

We did hear you loud and clear during Subpart B. 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.



As an agency, we can always improve our communication. As such, one of our main goals as we proceed with Travel Analysis is to work better with the Public. Public participation adds the people perspective to the science-based element of Travel Analysis. Travel Analysis is a tool that will allow the interests of the public, along with access needs, requirements, and limitations of the forest to be displayed with respect to the roads. We are asking 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.

7. How will I be able to prospect or explore for locatable minerals?

Those activities 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, you are invited to share information about the areas you feel are important for the purpose of prospecting or exploring. Travel Analysis will include your information to identify affected areas as potentially requiring access, or maintaining access, depending on location. 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.

8. How will I get to my property? mining claim? special-use permit area? recreation residence?

Travel Analysis will not affect access to private property, mining claims, permitted use areas or recreation residences. In fact, those uses *affect* 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. All that information will be gathered into Travel Analysis during Step 1 – Setting up the Analysis.

9. 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, such as closing roads. It will, however, identify and analyze issues, risks, benefits, and opportunities for possible future changes to the road system, since the current road system cannot be maintain or sustained. You are invited to share those locations that are important to access for fuel wood gathering, hunting, camping, etc. Travel Analysis will include your information to identify areas where motor vehicle access is desired to be sustained or improved. The analysis will identify opportunities that lead to an affordable and environmentally sustainable road system with a full understanding of associated tradeoffs.



10. What if you decide my favorite roads are no longer needed?

Let us know what values you associate with your favorite roads. Together with input from others, as well as available data on affected resources, those values and issues associated with roads will be analyzed by the forest. Travel Analysis will not make a decision to remove roads from the road system, but it may list system roads with lower benefit-to-risk ratios as opportunities to change or close.

11. How will you fight fires if you close all your roads?

One of the risk categories that will be analyzed under Travel Analysis is the ability to respond to emergencies with the current road system, including access for firefighting efforts. The analysis will look at historical fire data, locations, frequency, severity, etc. to display areas most at risk, and possibly requiring continued road access.

12. How will you make sure that roads don't pollute our water under the Clean Water Act?

Concerns over water quality from road impacts vary greatly from person to person. But downstream, the water quality takes on a different importance: The national forests of Oregon and Washington are the source of approximately 40% of the water supply for both states. Road density is a contributing factor in how well a watershed functions. Protecting the water quality from road impacts is one of the reasons for road system maintenance (Best Management Practices), in addition to providing safe access. When we can't afford to maintain and sustain our current road system, Travel Analysis provides the tool to see where the most risks to resources overlap with the forest needs and the needs of the users. Impact to water quality is one of the leading reasons for identifying roads for improvements, as well as identifying essential roads with higher maintenance costs.

13. How will you assure there are roads for access by persons with disabilities?

Travel Analysis will not make changes in the current road system. 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.



14. What do you consider your current road system? It should be every road that's out there.

The current road system being analyzed 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 will analyze all National Forest System Roads as described above. The presence and use of other system roads (private, county, state, other federal agency, etc.) will be 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, will be considered in context (i.e. watershed impacts from route density, potential future additions to the road system, etc.).

15. Will the roads in Roadless Areas be closed? RS 2477 will prevent you from closing any more roads.

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

Revised Statute 2477 is a statutory right to operate and maintain a public highway under the mining law of 1866. This law was repealed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). Existing RS 2477 rights were not repealed and may be perfected. These roads are public highways not Forest Service roads and are under the jurisdiction of local or state governments. Only a public entity, such as a state, county or municipal agency, may assert a right under R.S. 2477. Processes do exist for providing access for miners or others interested in obtaining permits. We ask you to share information about the specific roads and areas keep open. Travel Analysis will include your information to identify affected areas as potentially requiring access, or maintaining access, depending on location.

16. What will you do about important roads that cause a lot of environmental damage?

Travel Analysis won't "do" anything with roads causing environmental damage, but the analysis will use science-based data to broadly identify the type and location of environmental damage. In addition, the analysis will identify the "importance" or benefit of roads for access. The Travel Analysis report will show roads of great environmental concern, roads with high degree of benefits, and potential opportunities to keep 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.



17. Where do I go, or who do I call, to get more information?

Your local National Forest has a Travel Analysis team. You can also find more information on the internet at www.fs.usda.gov/r6

18. How do I give you my comments?

The Supervisor's Office of each national forest will have forms available for you to share your comments. In addition, each District Ranger office will have forms available for your comments. Each national forest will have a webpage for Travel Analysis, which will include a digital comment form. You may give your comments when a national forest conducts an open house, field trip, or other venue that includes public engagement.



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